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ABSTRACT

Nine complete papers and 32 abstracts are contained in this special issue drawn from the proceedings of the fifth annual meeting of writing supervisors within the City University of New York (CUNY). The first complete paper surveys basic writing programs over the decade and points to difficulties overcome, accomplishments,and future needs. The second and third papers detail the development of theoretical knowledge concerning language development, while the fourth and fifth discuss new programs within CUNY colleges that are designed to train both college and high school faculty. The sixth paper details an early major experiment in interdisciplinary education, while the seventh presents a new approach to that topic. The eighth paper considers problems that the CUNY Writing Assessment Test may pose as teachers attempt to meet the broader needs of students, while the ninth contains comments by a former CUNY instructor comparing her new situation with her old one. The 32 abstracts are presented in alphabetical order according to the presenters' names and deal with a variety of topics, including ESL and freshman composition, motivating nontraditional students, writing from the self, student responsibility in writing, and writing topics. (FL)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIFTH ANNUAL CUNY ASSOCIATION OF WRITING SUPERVISORS (CAWS) CONFERENCE

"Writing Problems After A Decade Of Open Admissions"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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PREFACE

CAWS After a Decade of Open Admissions

1981 marks the eighth year of the CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors. Founded in the fall of 1973, just two years after the City University of New York (CUNY) first opened its doors to all New York City high school graduates, CAWS has been both the child of Open Admissions and its nurturing parent. Writing supervisors, dismayed at the pedagogical mission thrust upon them by Open Admissions, formed CAWS to pool meager resources. As over the years writing teachers shared theories and experiences, a common expertise emerged that CAWS members took back to their campuses. The Open Admissions policy had become a stimulus to pedagogical growth rather than a threat to instructional survival. As we face a future as challenging as our past, we want to take note here of our history and accomplishments in order to assure the success of our next decade.

The first co-chairs of CAWS and also its founders were Harvey Wiener of LaGuardia Community College and Robert Lyons of Queens College. Other members who have shaped the history of CAWS include subsequent co-chairs Don McQuade (Queens), Sondra Perl (Hostos/Lehman), Charles Bazerman (Baruch; also served as secretary), and Marsha Cummins (Bronx); and secretaries Stephan Khinoy (Staten Island), Blanche Skurnick (City) and Robert Carling, Richard Sterling, and Carol Schoen (all of Lehman).

Since the original group was largely untenured, members considered at some length whether their apparent lack of power would be a hindrance to proposing policy. While they seldom in those years played David to the University's Goliath, this group was responsible for the first collection of data about CUNY writing programs, a feat that took considerable time and energy.

During faculty retrenchment at CUNY in 1976, CAWS kept the integrity of writing programs throughout the University by circulating information about practical strategies for surviving the cuts. A Statement of Purpose was drawn up in the fall of that year. Not only would campuses cooperate in the sharing of information, but CAWS also would aim to "improve the conditions for the successful teaching of writing," "review and evaluate criteria used in judging students' writing and in establishing placement and proficiency standards," "survey existing research in writing," "support the development of (writing) programs devoted to... underskilled students," and "create effective liaisons" with the high schools and national writing organizations.

In fulfillment of these aims, CAWS proposed sessions for NCTE and CCCC (through Richard Larson of Lehman who was also affiliated with CCCC), held seminars to discuss current research in writing, and shared information about testing long before CUNY adopted its Writing Skills Assessment Test. Other projects included a CUNY/CAWS essay contest and CAUSES, a newsletter.

The major and also most well-known contribution of CAWS has been its annual conference, begun in 1976, to which CUNY faculty have come to share theory and practice in the writing process, peer tutoring, writing across the curriculum, grantsmanship, and testing procedures. In addition, the conference has provided a forum for concerns in English Departments.

The accomplishments of CAWS reverberate throughout the City University. CAWS has had a considerable influence on a university increasingly pressed to defend its academic policies. In implementing the CUNY Freshman Skills Assessment Program (FSAP), the University drew on CAWS members for its Writing Task Force, including the three chairs—Robert Lyons, Ken Bruffee, and Harvey Wiener. While the Instructional Resource Center evolved independently of CAWS, all three deans have been former CAWS members: Mina Shaughnessy, Robert Lyons, and the current dean, Marie Jean Lederman. Bob and Marie have directed the FSAP as well.

CAWS was also the first CUNY-wide ad hoc faculty group and as such has served as a model for other skills groups: the ESL Council, the CUNY Math Discussion Group, and the CUNY Association of Reading Educators (CARE). In the light of our evolving sense of ourselves as a university, not merely a collection of colleges, CAWS has served as a prototype for organizations of the faculty from different campuses in the skills disciplines.

Major grants at CUNY have been directed by such present and former CAWS members as Sondra Perl, John Brereton and Richard Sterling (The Writing Development Project and The Writing Teachers Consortium); Ken Bruffee and Marcia Silver (The Brooklyn College Summer Institute in Training Peer Tutors); Mary Epes (The COMP LAB Project); and Harvey Wiener and Karen Greenberg (The National Testing Network in Writing).

Extending beyond the City University, the nationally-based Writing Program Administrators was founded and is chaired by CAWS founder and former chair, Harvey Wiener, and its journal is edited by Ken Bruffee.

While we will find it difficult to improve upon our accomplishments, we are justly proud of them and look to the future for new challenges to define new goals.

Linda Stanley, CAWS Co-Chair
Queensborough Community College

INTRODUCTION.

The proceedings of the CAWS Conferences have been published annually since 1978 in order to provide a record of the nature and extent of the issues that have been considered. The practice of printing brief abstracts has served the function of preserving the record, but it has often fallen short of the goal of providing a clear picture of the particular contributions to theory and practice that have emerged from these conferences. In order to rectify that situation we are, with this issue of the Proceedings, instituting a new policy of including full-length papers of some of the more significant studies, as well as continuing to print brief reports of the remainder.

The nine papers presented here cover a broad spectrum of the concerns of the conference. Dean Marie Jean Lederman's keynote speech, with its survey of basic writing programs over the past ten years, points to the difficulties overcome, the accomplishments achieved, and the future needs. Two (Reed and Roy) represent the continuing development of our theoretical knowledge of language acquisition; two others (Persky and Roemer) discuss new programs within colleges to train faculty both on the college campus and in the high schools. One paper (Black) surveys a major experiment in interdisciplinary education that preceded the current interest in the topic, while another (The Lehman Group) presents a developing approach. A problem which the CUNY Writing Assessment Test may pose as teachers attempt to meet the broader needs of students is pointed out by one faculty member (Baron), and a former CUNY instructor (Lim) compares her new situation with the one she knew while she was here.

The plan of this volume is to present, first, all of the full-length papers; the abstracts then follow in alphabetical order according to presenters' last names. We have given the department and college of each speaker to help readers who wish to gain more information about particular presentations.

Carol Schoen and Barry Kwalick
Editors

BUILDING AN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY: CUNY AND BEYOND

Keynote Address

Marie Jean Lederman, University Associate Dean, Academic Affairs

As we look back together at a decade of planning, instruction, and evaluation of writing programs at the City University of New York, our assessment is bound to contain a mixture of pride, anxiety, and nostalgia. As we look at the past we also look to a future in which reasoned planning and evaluation appear to be as difficult as they will be mandatory. Many of us in this room have shared significant parts of this decade as colleagues in English and SEEK departments, members of committees and task forces, speakers at local and national conferences and, of course, members of the CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors; some of us in this room founded CAWS. We have shared many of the tributes and much of the turmoil of this last decade.

Whatever the differences among us, however much our lives were shaped by forces outside our classrooms, the story of basic skills teaching at CUNY is the story of the growth of an educational community. It is a community not without internal struggles, but a community whose academic contributions have made CUNY one of the leaders in basic skills teaching in the United States and perhaps even the world.

One early step toward achieving this educational community was to convene conferences devoted to open discussion of the common problems we faced in teaching the population which arrived on our campuses with the Open Admissions program. From 1970 to 1974 the University sponsored yearly Open Admissions Conferences at which faculty and administrators from the seventeen undergraduate colleges first exchanged their experiences and ideas. The published proceedings of these conferences gave a larger number of faculty teaching basic skills their first chance to read about the best of each other's work. Perhaps most important, the conferences introduced us to others working at different campuses with students very much like our own. This led to the formation of ad hoc faculty skills groups which still exist and continue to play a major role in CUNY's instructional effort: our own organization, CAWS; the ESL (English as a Second Language) Council; the CUNY Mathematics Discussion Group; and the CUNY Reading Council (recently organized as CARE, the CUNY Association of Reading Educators). These groups meet regularly, hold their own conferences, and provide leadership in various University-wide activities.

This leadership in creating an educational community now extends beyond the University. In Spring 1981, CUNY sponsored the first national conference devoted solely to the teaching of remedial and developmental mathematics on the college level. Over two hundred speakers from the United States, Nova Scotia, Alaska, and Israel presented papers; attendance at the

conference was well over six hundred. Networks, an in-service training and basic skills dissemination organization based at Bronx Community College, as well as faculty from a number of CUNY colleges, helped implement the conference.

In our discipline of basic writing, CUNY leadership was obvious at the 1981 meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Dallas, Texas, in which 35 CUNY faculty members participated—a larger number than from any other college or university system in the country.

A second major step in building a basic skills community was the creation of the Instructional Resource Center (IRC) in 1974. With the encouragement of the Professional Staff Congress, as well as the various ad hoc skills groups, the Board of Higher Education created the Center "to facilitate, organize, expand and coordinate the various remedial efforts within the University." The work of its first director, Dean Mina Shaughnessy, proved seminal in subsequent research in basic writing and has had an enormous effect on educators throughout the nation. Since 1974, the IRC has functioned as consultant, disseminator of information, and sponsor of research in the basic skills.

As consultants, staff members of the IRC have met and communicated with educators from every state in the country and from nations throughout the world who, increasingly, face students unprepared in the basic skills necessary for successful work in college. Requests for information and guidance have come from postsecondary institutions in such countries as Australia, Great Britain, the Philippines, British Columbia, Thailand, and Nigeria.

In its role as disseminator of information of basic skills instruction, the IRC produces and aids in the production of a number of publications. *Resource*, the quarterly newsletter of the IRC, serves as a major vehicle for information exchange for 6,000 faculty and administrators both within and outside CUNY. Approximately 40% of the recipients of *Resource* are not affiliated with CUNY and are located in 41 states and abroad. The *Journal of Basic Writing*, first published jointly with City College in 1975 and now published by the IRC, was the first national journal dedicated to teaching basic writing on the college level. The IRC now publishes the *Journal of the CUNY Mathematics Discussion Group*. *The CUNY Bibliography of Basic Skills*, published in 1980, cites over 600 works written by CUNY faculty in the basic skills areas over the last ten years, indicating the contributions made by CUNY faculty to major national skills publications. In addition, the IRC is publishing a four-volume series on basic skills at CUNY. Now in print, the first three volumes on writing, reading, and English as a second language describe courses, curricula, entrance and exit criteria, support services, faculty, and faculty response to the CUNY Freshman Skills Assessment Program.

In addition to consultation and publishing, the IRC fosters the growth of an educational community in its role as sponsor of research in the basic skills. By giving released time to faculty members at the campuses, it provides the opportunity to evaluate various effects of basic skills teaching, such as the recently published, "The Effects of Variations in Essay Questions on the Writing Performance of CUNY Freshmen," the first of a research monograph series: several

other projects in reading, writing, and ESL are under way. In another research project, begun in Spring 1981, the IRC sent a questionnaire to every college and university in the country, surveying their perceptions of the basic skills of their students, the ways in which they assess these skills, and the ways in which they improve them. This survey will be the first step in identifying and making generalizations about writing assessment procedures currently in place throughout the country.

Another step in the growth of a community of basic skills educators is the Freshman Skills Assessment Program (FSAP). This minimum competency testing program began with a Board of Higher Education resolution in April 1976 and has been in effect for all incoming freshmen since the Fall 1978 semester. In addition to fulfilling the initial Board mandate, the testing program insures that students in need of basic skills instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics are identified prior to entry and are placed in courses appropriate to their levels of skills. They are retested upon completion of the courses. Students must pass all three tests in order to enter the upper divisions of CUNY. The overall impact of the Freshman Skills Assessment Program has been a favorable one. We see a movement toward agreement on standards of minimum competency in reading, writing, and mathematics in the seventeen undergraduate colleges in the City University. While colleges are free to set higher standards for competency, for the first time CUNY has a generally agreed-upon "floor" for these standards. This has improved the communication of standards among colleges and, particularly, has improved articulation between the community and senior colleges. This communication is vital, and it brings us a long way from the isolation of the basic skills programs which characterized the beginning of Open Admissions.

While not universally loved—nothing at CUNY ever is—the testing program has been widely supported on the campuses by CUNY faculty. This support has been due, in large measure, to faculty participation in task forces set up for this purpose. Unlike other state and university testing programs, largely shaped by administrators and outside tests and measurement consultants, CUNY's testing program grew from and is governed by the experience of faculty members teaching in and administering basic skills programs at CUNY. A major factor was the insistence of the members of the CUNY Writing Task Force on a writing sample as its test of minimum competency. Those of us on the Task Force believed that a piece of student writing indicates writing ability more accurately than a machine-scored standardized test. Moreover, we knew that the use of a writing sample signals both CUNY English teachers and English teachers in the secondary schools that the business of writing classes is *writing*.

This facet of the FSAP program unites us and contributes to our leadership. We have shown that it is possible to maintain the integrity of the testing program despite the mind-boggling task of providing double and sometimes triple readings of the 33,000 entering freshman papers that are annually presented, not to mention the thousands of retests at the end of every semester of students who do not satisfy the CUNY standard of minimum competency when they first enter the University. Some English faculty did not believe this could be done. For instance, David Foster stated unequivocally in the January 1981 issue of *College English* that

No university of any size or diversity has the logistical capacity of administering many

thousands of writing samples, evaluating them, and placing students *solely* according to their results. No faculty would give the enormous amount of time and effort required for such a procedure; even teaching assistants would defy the lash under such a task.

We have proved them wrong. That we have been able to accomplish this at CUNY—with the size and complexity of our institution; that we have been able to conduct yearly central audits that indicate approximately an 85% rate of agreement on the pass-fail dimension between the audit readers and the readers at the campuses—is something of which we can all be proud. What it established is that if we can do it here, it can be done in any educational institution anywhere.

Faculty at fourteen of the seventeen undergraduate campuses have elected to make passing the Writing Assessment Test part of the exit criteria from basic writing courses—a clear indication that the test does indeed measure an agreed-upon level of basic competence in writing. In addition, faculty report that there is within and among colleges a movement towards sharing uniform standards for writing competency. This has happened in part through the training sessions for faculty scoring the Writing Assessment Test and in part through the impetus for a general re-examination of sequence of courses, curricula, and proficiency levels in order to determine whether and how to use the Writing Assessment Test as part of the exit criteria from courses.

The national educational community is now looking to CUNY for information about testing. At last spring's Conference on College Composition and Communication, there were numerous inquiries at conference sessions and at the IRC-sponsored booth about CUNY's Writing Assessment Test. Similar interest was expressed at conferences last year, such as the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the AFT/Quest Conference, and the Conference of the New York State Bureau of English Education.

This year the Office of Academic Affairs and the Chancellor's Task Force on Writing received a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to establish CUNY as the center for the National Testing Network in Writing (NTNW). The project was funded for two years and will establish a communications network among colleges and universities currently testing and those who want to begin programs in testing the writing skills of their students for placement or proficiency.

The basic skills community at CUNY has moved beyond its own members and has been involved in a number of projects with faculty members from other departments within their own colleges, in high schools, and in the community at large. Part of this is the writing across the curriculum movement. A conference of the CUNY ESL Council in May 1980 focused on ways in which ESL teachers can help teachers in the subject areas to improve their instruction of second-language students. The Spring/Summer 1980 issue of the *Journal of Basic Writing* deals with this effort. Several CUNY colleges, among them LaGuardia, Lehman, and Hunter, have developed instructional material based on writing across the curriculum programs at their campuses. *Learning Through Writing* grew out of faculty seminars at Hunter led by Ann Raimes and Charles Persky. LaGuardia's Integrated Skills Reinforcement programs have been widely publicized, and a book based on materials developed there will appear shortly. At five of the colleges

at CUNY there are now college-wide efforts to coordinate basic skills instruction through a central committee or task force.

Efforts to reach beyond the classroom at CUNY include projects with the New York City high schools. Faculty at CUNY serve as consultants to reading/writing projects in the high schools, among them the much-publicized model writing project WEDGE (Writing Each Day Generates Excellence). The WEDGE workbook includes materials inspired by seminars led by CUNY English teachers. At Lehman, the New York City Writing Project trains high school teachers to improve their own writing skills and adapt their newly-learned techniques to the students whom they are teaching. The Queens English Project attempts to create a unified senior year of high school English and Freshman Composition at Queens College. The program articulates with five Queens high schools with some Queens College students serving as tutors in the high school classes. Throughout the university, faculty projects involve the communities around them. One example among many is the Police Management Writing Project, based at John Jay, which seeks to improve the job-related writing of policemen.

The educational community developed out of diversity and adversity is an achievement we can be proud of, but we must now use our leadership and our sense of community to cope with the problems that lie ahead. One issue that needs our attention is the question of class size. From college to college, class size in basic skills varies from classes which routinely have 15 students to those which have 30. I think that almost all of us would agree that our experiences tell us that the larger our classes get, the fewer essays can be assigned and discussed individually with students—and we have yet to discover a method of teaching adults to write which bypasses these activities. Recent studies conducted by Smith and Glass and reported in the *American Educational Research Journal* in 1980 and a monograph surveying research in class size published in 1978 by the Educational Research Service indicate that smaller class size does improve the learning situation for economically and academically deprived students. In addition, there are favorable effects on both teacher and student morale and attitudes toward themselves and each other. Perhaps most significant, in smaller classes teachers are more likely to individualize instruction and use innovative teaching techniques. Yet the threat to smaller classes is real, and increasing budgetary restrictions will tempt some administrators to look to larger class units as a way out; continued research is needed to make the larger community aware of what we know as teachers about the effectiveness of the small class.

We also need to increase support services. All of the colleges have some learning centers outside of the classrooms. These take various patterns: structured, auto-tutorial writing labs; learning centers in separate college divisions; English skills labs which are mandatory parts of the regular course work. In addition, there has been a growth of peer tutoring programs on many campuses. Many professionals believe that peer tutoring is both cost effective and educationally sound, for students often learn best from one another. Moreover, in such programs, both tutors and those tutored benefit. Professors from Brooklyn College regularly offer summer programs through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to train college teachers who come from all over the country in the use of peer tutoring. But more of these services are needed, and we need the research studies that will support our claim.

Above all, we must work together to discover what, in the face of high attrition, works best for the largest number of students who come to us. Our special charge as English professionals is to examine, critically, every aspect of our teaching and to work with institutional researchers at our campuses to develop research projects which will tell us more than we now know about teaching. Compared to other academic areas, with histories dating back through the ages, the discipline of basic skills at the college level is a relatively new undertaking. We must continue to remind those who demand all of the answers immediately that nationally, the questions are just beginning to be asked. Yet, while this decade has been but a brief moment in an historical perspective, it has constituted a large portion of our own professional lives. We are sometimes discouraged: we should know more; we should do better. But we cannot allow ourselves more than fleeting moments of such discouragement. We have worked hard and have fought for a larger share of money and commitment on the part of faculty and administrators not directly involved, as we are, in basic skills classes. We have evidence that the commitment is growing. But if we want to insure a larger amount of economic support, we are going to have to be responsible for doing the research to prove that what we demand is necessary. If we want smaller classes, more support services, more tutorial programs, we must design studies that will indicate that these are necessary to our best instructional effort. No one will do this for us, and no one has the potential of doing it better.

Few of us who taught in the SEEK, College Discovery, and Open Admissions programs in the late sixties and early seventies could have known what influence our work would have beyond the walls of our own classrooms. We certainly didn't think we were in the vanguard of what would become a growing national problem and a dominant educational movement ten years later. Gene Maeroff in his *New York Times* article of March 31, 1981, "CUNY Leads in Remedial Programs," wrote, "Despite funding shortages, City University has gained such expertise that institutions around the country are emulating its techniques as those schools, too, begin to serve a lesser-prepared constituency." We are in many ways the founders of an educational community in teaching basic skills, particularly in the field of writing, and we are expected to continue the work which, in large part, we began.

BACK TO SQUARE "2": STARTING OVER IN THE 80's

Carol E. Reed
English Department, Brooklyn College
and
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

During the Open Admissions era, from 1969 to 1975, there was a curriculum intervention and language-learning research project at Brooklyn College, known as the Language Curriculum Research Group. This project was funded primarily by the Ford Foundation from 1970 to 1974, with supplemental grants from the CUNY Research Foundation and the New York Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP). The project received considerable attention in the local, national, and international press, when it became known that the focus of the research was the nonstandard vernacular of Black and Hispanic speakers of "Black English," a low-prestige dialect or variety of English spoken in most urban areas of the nation. The project studied the implications of the systematic divergence between this dialect and standard written English in the writing of Black and Hispanic students entering CUNY colleges primarily through discretionary admissions programs (e.g., SEEK, EOP, and College Discovery before Open Admissions and eventually through the relaxed admissions requirements instituted by the Open Admissions policy). This research enabled the project to develop a textbook or curriculum-resource book of classroom units with extensive teacher-preparation materials accompanying them.

The textbook, entitled *Standard English Composition for Speakers of Black English Vernacular,* was used in basic writing courses at Brooklyn College and at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Both the textbook and the teacher-preparation materials were made available to CUNY writing teachers, university-wide, during 1972-74 at a series of teacher-training seminars held at the CUNY Graduate Center and taught by Language Curriculum Research Group staff. In addition to the textbook and teacher-training materials, a diagnostic assessment instrument, the English Variation Placement Test (EVPT), was developed. This test evaluated the extent of both receptive and productive competence in standard English, assessing students' intuitions about the rules of standard usage, as well as determining or predicting the extent of structural or grammatical interference from Black English Vernacular likely to influence students' writing. The EVPT draws an English variability profile of the student, serving as both a diagnostic and a placement instrument.

During the project, our goals were mainly threefold: 1) in addition to furthering the linguistic research on the vernacular English of inner-city students enrolled during Open Admissions, 2) we also wanted our students to learn to write a college-level expository essay, 3) as well as learn to express themselves in clear and consistently standard English. But underlying these three main goals was another, secondary goal: to educate teachers about the effects of dialect differences on students' writing (especially on students' ability to edit their writing for nonstandard usage patterns and revise these to their appropriate standard English equivalents). Of greatest importance was the need to awaken teachers, curriculum planners, and other educational policymakers to the necessity for changing the way we teach such students to write.

There was then and is now a crying need for teachers to recognize that, for the student who speaks vernacular English as a native dialect, learning to use standard English is not an entirely native language-learning situation. The teacher cannot assume that students come to the classroom with a native-speaker's knowledge or intuitions about the rules of standard grammar and syntax. What's more, the teacher cannot ignore the systematic effects of the rule-governed features of vernacular English on students' linguistic perceptions and writing behaviors.

The curriculum-resource book or textbook mentioned earlier was developed by the Brooklyn College research group to achieve these goals. It consists of two volumes: a manual for students and a manual for teachers. The students' manual is the basis for classroom instruction. It utilizes a set of classroom activities, reading and writing assignments, and workbook exercises incorporating strategies adapted from second-language teaching methodology for helping students to gain proficiency in standard written English. These curriculum materials are "contrastive." They make extensive use of vernacular dialect features in comparison with their standard dialect equivalents to explain the differences between standard and nonstandard usage conventions and to make the boundaries between the two systems clear to the students.

The contrastive approach to language instruction is adapted from foreign language teaching, in recognition of the fact that the native speaker of vernacular English operates under a different enough set of rules and conventions for the use of English, so as to render the classroom a "quasi-foreign language-learning situation." And, insofar as this student must achieve competence in standard English, the nonjudgmental, contrastive approach to language instruction also recognizes the student's need to maintain communicative competence in his or her native vernacular dialect while learning to write the standard dialect. The contrastive approach does not insist that the student totally alienate himself or herself from his or her native speech community, prerequisite to learning standard English. Rather, it assumes an intuitional knowledge of the community vernacular and finds ways to incorporate that knowledge into the instructional process. Students are encouraged to build upon their intuitions about their native dialect by adding to them information about the differences between vernacular and standard English—a much less threatening way to learn standard grammar and sentence structure than methods of teaching which fail to take the student's full-blown, rule-governed vernacular dialect into account.

While we in the Brooklyn College research group were engaged in an effort to educate teachers and educational policy-makers within CUNY about the problems of teaching basic writing to vernacular-speaking Open Admissions students, a battle was raging outside among those engaged in linguistic research on nonstandard vernacular varieties of English (especially Black English). There was considerable disagreement about the actual significance of these systematic divergences between the vernacular usage of Black students and the standard or vernacular usage of White students. There were basically two points of view on the issue (with various gradations between):

1) those who believed that Black/White speech differences are functional and structural, *yet trivial* (i.e., confined to surface phonological features of the language), and

2) those who believed that the structural and functional differences between the dialects are deep, complex, and representative of a serious cross-cultural conflict which can and does

interfere *significantly* with the development of communicative competence in standard English.

Those espousing the second position maintained that the systematic syntactic and semantic divergence between the dialects dramatically influences comprehension and production (or the decoding and encoding processes) of vernacular speakers attempting to operate within the linguistic constraints imposed by the standard English requirements of the classroom environment.

It is my firm conviction that the second assessment of the situation is the more accurate one. But it is also the more problematic, because it requires a more radical change in the way we teach English, and especially writing, to students whose native dialect is Black English, or its structurally related Caribbean Creole English cousins.

In the late 60's and early 70's, much work was done toward "educating educators" about their need to learn more about the structure of vernacular English and the implications of its use among inner-city student populations for the improvement of those students' standard English reading and writing skills. Within CUNY, as mentioned before, the Language Curriculum Research Group offered an ongoing, drop-in seminar for university-wide Open Admissions instructors which met at the Graduate Center on 42nd Street. Participants came from most of the CUNY colleges (a few from outside CUNY). In addition to this seminar, my colleague Bill Stewart and I team-taught an experimental course on Black English vernacular at Columbia University, Teachers College, in the Master of Arts in Teaching program. Another version of this course I later taught within the MAT program at SUNY, Stony Brook. There were also extensive teacher education efforts by groups of linguists at the Education Study Center and the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C. and by the research group at the government's Southwest Regional Laboratories for Educational Research and Development on the West Coast.

Unfortunately, most of these efforts were either seriously reduced or abruptly halted altogether after the funding crises of 1975, when considerably explosive controversy broke out in the national and international press over the appropriateness of acknowledging the use of vernacular English in the classroom setting. The lay public seemed to fear that any recognition at all given to nonstandard features of vernacular usage in the classroom, even though they were characteristic of students' normal speech patterns and even though there were pedagogically legitimate classroom uses of them for explicating systematic dialect differences, would actually reinforce the vernacular, which was generally perceived to be the "slovenly, sloppy speech of the ignorant and unsophisticated."

As a result of the great deal of misinformation about the nature of vernacular English, made worse by the sensationalization of the issue in the press, many educators have become timid and fearful of any curriculum materials focusing on dialect differences and their influence on the language-learning situation. Many back away from the issue entirely, choosing to ignore the research data indicating that there is merit, rather than risk, to the contrastive method of teaching nonstandard English speakers. Unscientific and irrational popular attitudes toward nonstandard varieties of English (especially negative attitudes toward Black English) successfully

stifle efforts to disseminate new and effective teaching strategies to English teachers in inner-city classrooms across the country.

Consequently, we find ourselves "back to square '2'" where teacher education is concerned. We are not all the way back to square "1," since we at least no longer have to convince people that such things as Black English and other vernacular dialects exist. I believe that this battle finally has been won. But the wide-spread apprehension about making productive use in the classroom, in a practical way, of the large number of grammatical contrasts between standard English and vernacular varieties has been so intense as to make it necessary for us to start over again in the 80's almost where we began in the 60's. We are faced with having to "reinvent the wheel" in the area of raising teachers' consciousness about dialect differences and their implications for teaching students standard English. We are still in the position of having to recognize the "quasi-foreign language teaching situation" we find ourselves in and which we must impose upon our students, if they are to achieve command of standard written English. We are "back to square '2'," in that we are still having to insist upon teachers' acquiring a new perspective on, and a sorely needed understanding of, the sociolinguistic factors affecting the language teaching situation we are in, especially those of us who teach in inner-city areas like New York City. For, if we are to make higher education a real opportunity and not a "revolving door" for the masses of low-income students from urban areas like ours who seek a college degree, the first line of scrimmage for these students must be in the area of standard English acquisition.

We who teach basic writing at the college level are in a very real sense our students' "last chance for literacy." And even this last chance will make no difference, if we as teachers do not adopt a more linguistically sound approach to teaching standard written English.

REMEDIATION IN THE TEACHING OF REMEDIAL ENGLISH

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The current policy of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), the college writing section of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), as expressed in its resolution, "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (SROL) and the criteria set by the CUNY Task Force on Writing for judging essays written on the CUNY Writing Assessment Test (CWAT) both reveal that, in theory and in practice, college teachers lack conscious knowledge of English grammatical processes and have failed to comprehend some basic linguistic and sociolinguistic facts. The result of these policies has been to distort the nature and function of the teaching of basic writing.

The SROL resolution asserts that teaching standard English to speakers of nonstandard dialects is not only unnecessary but "immoral." To support its claim, it asserts: "Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity." This "myth," the SROL states, was created and is perpetuated in "an attempt of one social group to exert its

dominance over another." This is not so. The teaching of standard English is not a matter of cultural imperialism; rather, standard languages are a product of the needs of a complex society to communicate precisely over wide areas. On the other hand, there is nothing inherently better about the standard language as language; it is merely the standard system.

To exemplify the claim that standard English is only trivially different from nonstandard dialect, the resolution provides the following sentences:

1) Mary's daddy is at home.
2) Mary's daddy is to home.
3) Mary daddy home.

About these sentences, the SROL incorrectly asserts, "Preference for one form over another, then, is not based on meaning or even exactness of expression, but depends on social attitudes and cultural norms."

However, from the point of view of both the speaker and the hearer, the differences are not trivial. The range of meanings of sentence (3) within Black English entails: Mary's daddy's home; Mary, daddy is home; Mary, is daddy home?; as well as the meaning of sentence (1). Further, the person producing sentence (3) may not control the processes involving word final "s" used for the marking of pluralization, tense, possession, and the contractions of "is, was, has" in standard English. The standard English speaker hearing or reading sentence (3) would respond that the sentence is ungrammatical English and that the meaning cannot be known using the grammatical processes accepted throughout the English-speaking world.

The differences between sentences (1) and (2) involve the different meanings of "at" and "to." Is this difference trivial? Are Americans willing to lose the distinction between "Get that at the bank" and "Get that to the bank" because the SROL asserts that the distinction between "at" and "to" is based on an attempt by one social group to dominate others? The claim that the distinction between these two markers does not affect meaning, deep structure, and exact communication is not only absurd, but fails to address the problem faced by many students who are in our colleges. The attempt to deny the structural differences between standard and Black English is based on political theory, rather than in reality or in correct linguistic analysis.

The SROL resolution says, "Unfortunately, many employers have narrowly conceived notions of the relationship between linguistic performance and job competence." Although this statement recognizes the reality of the market, the argument goes on to suggest an improbable solution:

> Since, English teachers are in a large part responsible for the narrow attitudes of today's employers, changing attitudes toward dialect variation does not seem an unreasonable goal, for today's students are tomorrow's employers.

In this, it assigns to English teachers more blame than they deserve and more power than they have ever had or ever will have to change the linguistic fabric of the society. SROL requires teachers to be crusaders against an incorrectly seen linguistic imperialism, rather than becoming

competent at teaching the forms of the standard language to those who need to learn them. In this approach, it attempts to escape the problems of the teaching of English and consigns a large group of students to third-class positions in society.

Carol Reed considers this call to change language attitudes from the point of view of a student, who asks, "How are we to negotiate our way through the society during the hundred years or so it may take (him and his friends) to convince the American public and especially the American employer to appreciate the legitimacy of our dialect...?

The concern with the teacher's role is significant, however, because it focuses attention on the fact that most teachers can recognize ungrammatical forms of English, but lack the conscious knowledge and training to correct error; they are unable to teach what is needed. Faced with a new population of students, teachers have added the techniques of correction to those of elaboration and analysis, in the hope that correcting errors will enable students to learn the categories and markings of the English verb, even if teachers do not consciously understand them. They hope that if students make enough errors, they will learn what is right. Language teaching as systematic spot corrections cannot illuminate or teach target forms.

SROL asserts the students' right to their own language, but accepts the teachers' right to remain uninformed about what they need to teach. By advocating an incorrectly motivated and improbable process of attitude change, it assures students their right to resist what is claimed to be the linguistic and cultural oppression involved in learning standard English, thus tragically insuring their lack of success. The radical myopia of the SROL position combines with the systemic incompetence in teaching standard English to deny even more students the slim chance they have of succeeding by denying them what they need to know in order to communicate effectively in this society.

Turning to matters closer to home, an entirely different attitude toward standard and nonstandard dialects is found in the administration and scoring of the CUNY Writing Assessment Test (CWAT). The administrators and scorers of the CWAT clearly believe that students need to be able to produce standard English. However, there seems to be some confusion both in theory and practice about what it means to produce standard written English at an acceptable level to enter a freshman English class.

According to the published guidelines used in scoring the CWAT, a passing paper is: 1) Logical—that is, "competently organized," with a "pattern of development," and with assertions supported by explanation or illustration; and 2) Grammatical—that is, "Sentences reflect a command of syntax within the ordinary range of standard written English, and the writer "avoids both the monotony of rudimentary syntax and the incoherence created by tangled syntax."

On the other hand, a failing paper is: 1) Illogical—that is, it "suffers from general incoherence and has no discernible pattern of organization;" and 2) Ungrammatical—"not sufficiently stable" and "rudimentary" syntax, "a high frequency of error in the regular features of standard written English," and frustrating to the reader.

Clearly, passing the CWAT entails grammatical control of standard English and logical organization. This is as it should be. However, grammar and logic are weighed simultaneously on the same scale. The term "incoherence" is used to describe failings in both grammar and logical organization. The apples and oranges of written communication are not distinguished. These guidelines imply that logic and organization can be expressed in standard English, but that nonstandard dialect forms cannot be coherently logical. This presumption betrays almost complete ignorance of both the nonstandard dialect and conscious understanding of English grammar.

In fact, nonstandard English speakers can think and express their emotions. They can reason and can communicate in nonstandard dialect strong or subtle or complex experiences and be understood by others. Some of them even struggle to reach the temple of knowledge City University represents. That they are illogical and disorganized is the message that greets them and their linguistic skills that differ from the standard. The message is delivered by a faculty frustrated by the grammatical differences their students exhibit because they are unprepared to teach the forms and processes of standard English these students need.

Karen Greenberg's research on the scoring of the CWAT supports this view. She writes: "Students' ability to avoid errors in standard written English is a better predictor of teachers' quality ratings than the ability to manipulate complex syntactic structures." Greenberg found that the best predictor of a scorer's passing a paper is the number of word-form errors made by the writer. Word-form errors are those in idiomatic usage and incorrect affixes. Greenberg writes, "Shaughnessy has said that all of these word-form errors are 'advanced' errors because they are signs of students' attempts to acquire formal academic vocabulary, whatever the cost in error." These errors are not generally made by those for whom standard English is a native dialect or language. They are made almost exclusively by those for whom English is a second dialect or language. This finding indicates that even though students master the grammar of standard English, they are heavily penalized for errors at the lexical and idiomatic level. This is a particularly unfortunate practice because almost all of those who learn any language after adolescence never fully master the idiomatic level of that language; thus, this practice amounts to an unreasonable expectation of what students are to be capable of as they attempt to enter a freshman writing program.

Both the guidelines and the research clearly indicate that at least part of what goes under the guise of the maintenance of standards is rooted in dialect chauvinism and the inability of the institution to confront the facts that the language of some students is structurally different from English.

It is essential that those who teach be qualified by possessing the knowledge that is essential to doing their job. The teachers of English who deal with speakers of nonstandard Black English need to be trained so that they know enough about English to teach systematically those forms of English that are needed by their students. Methodologically, the teachers of remedial English need to develop contrastive exercises that enable students to recognize what is and isn't standard English and to be able to confidently produce the forms of the standard language in appropriate situations.

Sociolinguistically, teachers should be able to recognize errors in the use of standard English as just that, rather than as signals of the inability to reason or to organize. They also need to be able to understand that language forms are themselves neutral tools of human communication that have historic existence and social and psychological utility. There is a need to recognize that these factors have little to do with the social value assigned by the society's attitudes toward language forms that are different. Students need not be deprived of the dialect of their family and friends, but they clearly need to learn standard English. They have not largely because their teachers have not been prepared or able to teach them.

LEARNING WRITING: SUBJECT TEACHERS TAKE ON FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

Charles Persky
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Since the awarding of a large NEH grant to the Hunter College Humanities Division in the spring of 1975, faculty and administration have been able over the last six years to take a series of concrete and successful steps toward the improvement of student writing and the integration of writing and learning across the curriculum. The Hunter College Writing Center, the first step, was established in the fall of 1976 and has been growing successfully ever since. In response to the Center's suggesting a need for faculty discussion about writing, the Hunter College Faculty Seminar on Teaching Writing in the Subject Areas was established and in the spring of 1978 began a series of discussions among seventeen faculty members representing fourteen different departments. The Seminar's report resulted in the Hunter College Senate resolution of Spring 1980 which created interdisciplinary committees to examine and promote good writing across the curriculum.

In an attempt to support these efforts, Professors Charles Persky and Ann Raimes, cofounders of the Writing Center and co-chairs of the Faculty Seminar, published a small faculty handbook: *Learning Through Writing: A Practical Guide to Student Writing for College Teachers* (Hunter College, 1981). Having to write brief, clear instructions for subject teachers which would convey the various processes of composition suggested that perhaps training for and actually teaching a writing course was the ideal way to introduce faculty to the pleasures and pains of trying to use writing as a form of learning. This concept was the start of our present experiment.

Other concerns all focused on our observation that students had difficulty transferring skills apparently "learned" in their writing courses to their subject courses. A student able to handle a comparison-contrast paper in Freshman Composition was for some reason unable to apply the very same mode in a subject context. Questionnaires sent out to faculty asking them to identify their students' major writing problems cited the central topics of Freshman Composition: thesis, evidence, organization, argument. We knew these were being taught and even demonstrated by students in their essays, but they were being "forgotten."

Would such skills take root more firmly if initially they were practiced in the context of a typical college subject? Perhaps at least part of the problem could be assigned to the fact that in most Freshman Composition courses the content, the "evidence," consisted mainly of hearsay, opinion, and purely personal experience, and not actual data based on texts. In short, was the gap between what the writing was about in the Freshman Composition course as opposed to the subject course simply too wide for the student to bridge? And finally, would student writing itself improve if there was something substantive to write about, if the student had a chance to "soak" in a particular subject and absorb the vocabulary and characteristic manner of expression, a chance to observe how sentence structure and rhetorical mode were organic responses to demands created by the content, not mechanical contrivances arbitrarily imposed from without? What would happen if the student experienced writing as a form of learning even in Freshman Composition?

To train volunteers from other departments to teach Freshman Composition seemed an ideal way to address all our questions about faculty and students. (Obviously, the solution of a teaching team consisting of a content teacher and a writing teacher would contradict our assumption of the identity of subject and form, thereby creating a pernicious lesson for students in the form of an allegory: Mr. Form and Mr. Content. It would also deprive subject teachers of the necessary direct experience.) And so we set about getting them.

Much to our delight and surprise, talking faculty into trying the experiment did not prove to be our biggest problem; it was getting department chairmen to release the mostly key members of their departments who turned out to be interested in what we wanted to do. Eventually we gathered four professors from four different departments: Classics, Nursing, Political Science, and Sociology. All their released time was covered by NEH funds.

Our two-hour weekly training seminars, chaired by Professors Persky and Raimes, began in the fall of 1980. They were conducted as workshops in which we discussed certain texts, examined student papers, talked with Freshman Composition teachers, and composed detailed syllabi for the sections the members were to teach in the spring. The suggestion did surface that a full term of training before teaching was not necessary; we violently disagreed.

Although the readings served as a good introduction to the field, responses indicated that they were received as somewhat abstract. It is interesting to note how infrequently experienced subject teachers view themselves as possessed of a substantial backlog of concrete teaching experience which can be drawn upon for referents in any discussion of writing.

Much more successful was the examination of actual student papers. We first looked at the initial class essays written by students in a Freshman Composition section then in progress. For some members of the Seminar, it was the first time that they had ever read a student essay so closely, or with the intention of diagnosing errors. Discussions centered on the nature of the problems, their possible origins, and on what should happen next in the student-teacher relationship as the best means of helping the student improve.

Instructors from whose classes the papers were drawn were invited to the Seminar to talk about the students, to show us their other essays, and to help create a total context for our

analyses of their work. This proved to be an important part of the Seminar members' experience because they were not accustomed to considering a single paper as part of a larger process of learning. Seeing the single paper in this new way in turn opened up the opportunity to discuss comments and grades as themselves a part of an ongoing process rather than as a form of farewell: the typical approach to the traditional term paper. Seminar members also found it instructive to compare their own comments and grades with those of other teachers. Especially helpful in this regard was the Spring 1958 newsletter, "Evaluating a Theme," of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English, which presents twenty-five different responses and grades elicited by a single student essay.

In addition to the teachers whose papers we used, other Freshman Composition instructors were asked to visit with us. They gave us the opportunity to discuss various approaches and attitudes, and to engage in very practical question-and-answer sessions. We tried to expose our 'students" to a wide range of teachers, from adjuncts to senior faculty of the English Department. No attempt was made to ignore the problems and the outright unhappiness of those who simply found the course painful and frustrating. Our goal was not to sell Freshman Composition, but to strengthen it through an honest evaluation of its limitations and possibilities.

Those limitations and possibilities manifested themselves most concretely during the final activity of the Seminar: the creation of day-by-day syllabi for the Freshman Composition sections our volunteers would teach in the spring of 1981. At each of these meetings work-in-progress was presented and multiple copies provided for peer analysis and criticism. These were perhaps our richest discussions, as we all defended, attacked, or simply worried over our different plans and brainstorms. The immediate end was to anticipate problems and in this way to provide some security about "Monday mornings." The ultimate aim soon made itself felt as the major obstacle: the authentic integration of writing and learning, composition and subject, form and content.

At present our "graduates" are wrestling with the problems of writing and learning in their own courses: Taking Care of Yourself: Self Help for Physical and Emotional Problems (Nursing); Ancient Myth and The Modern World(Classics); The Two Faces of America: Beliefs About "We the People" and Racial Minorities (Sociology); Tell It to City Hall (Political Science). In a sense, the titles highlight the central challenge precisely because these are *not* introductory courses in this or that subject, but writing courses whose discussions and topics are drawn from the various fields represented.

The difficulties presented by the attempt to create such courses are perhaps most graphically evident in the evolution of the syllabi drafted by the members of the Seminar. Full analyses will eventually be available, but for the moment even a brief glance at some details will yield several interesting points. Exact copies of early and later versions of the first class hour, composed by Professor Joan Sayre, are given in Table 1.

Everything about the first draft, even the very divisions explicit in its layout, suggest the difficulties encountered by the subject teacher used to presenting complex material in essentially lecture format when that same teacher tries to construct a student-centered course which emphasizes the processes of composing as forms of learning. It is encouraging (as well as a compli-

ment to the teacher) to note how different the second draft is in its assumptions and approach, and how many of the concerns of the first version have been translated into a much more student-centered, process-oriented context.

Table 1

EARLY VERSION:

1.	one hour:	course introduction, organization requirements, books class discussion: topic: Where do we get our ideas about what a healthy life is like? To what extent do these ideas differ from the way you are now living?	CONTENT	WRITING
		ASSIGNMENT: look at the advertising to which you are exposed (TV, newspapers, posters, etc.). Answer the question in 1-2 pages. What is advertising telling you about what a healthy person should be like? (not graded)	socio-cultural influences on perceptions of health	where to get ideas about topics

LATER VERSION:

class# 1
introduction to course

textbook

discussion of topic of course: Taking Care of Yourself
What health topics are you interested in?

in-class writing sample: 30 minutes

Do you have a story about your experience (or the experience of someone you know) with the health care system? (increase awareness of writing as communication)

In addition to the conclusions about what our colleagues learned from the Seminar which are suggested by the above comparison-contrast, we would cite their discovery that teaching writing can be intellectually engaging and satisfying and that thinking about writing as a form of learning creates new attitudes towards one's own subject and writing itself. Even while working on the syllabi, and certainly now in the light of their classroom experience, the concept of "coverage" evolved into a complex issue, especially when coupled with a heightened sense of the process of learning.

The observation that they have far more subject material than they need to teach writing has been made frequently during discussions that we have had this spring as we continue to meet and evaluate these special sections. Such an observation deserves special emphasis because of the way in which traditional attitudes toward "covering the material" have plagued attempts to incorporate content into writing courses, often driving administrators to ban all subject material

as a means of rescuing writing. Our colleagues have learned that the writing teacher (all teachers?) must slow down and walk students carefully through what has become unfamiliar ground. A little content can go a long way.

It is our hope that the project itself will take us a long way toward answering the questions which first prompted us to initiate the experiment. We will be conducting various tests and follow-up studies in an effort to determine whether in fact subject matter matters. In the meantime, a great deal of positive publicity for Freshman Composition has resulted from the fact that tenured, senior professors have volunteered to study the teaching of writing, to try to teach it, and have actually stated in public how much they enjoy it.

THE QUEENS ENGLISH PROJECT: CAMARADERIE, NOT COMPETITION

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I had been teaching English at Grover Cleveland High School for 11 years when I was introduced to the Queens English Project (Q.E.P.); my work there has given me new enthusiasm for teaching reading, writing, and thinking skills. In Fall 1977, I began attending the Project's federally funded seminars, in which Marie Ponsot presented to local high school administrators and teachers, and some college teachers too, the innovative curriculum of English 01, Queens College's course for entering students who do not qualify for regular freshman composition. For two years, seminar members met to work through the curriculum much as students do, to discuss it, and gradually to adapt it to high school use.

Although each participating high school has now found its own way of integrating the Q.E.P. curriculum that evolved from the seminars into its existing English program, all have remained true to a common philosophy whose premises are few:

1. *Prolific reading and writing.* We believe that if we want our students to read and write better, we must persuade them to do more reading and writing than ever before, and that this is more likely to happen if we give them assignments they can enjoy and relate to.

2. *Minimal competition.* To facilitate this enjoyment, we believe in camaraderie, not competition. Some of us minimize competitiveness by de-emphasizing grades and by telling students that competition is not possible in writing, that there are as many good writers in a class as there are people. Tutors, approximately contemporary with our students, enhance this relaxed atmosphere. They reinforce and supplement the teacher's efforts wherever needed, reduce the overall student-teacher ratio to a manageable level, offer students an accessible model to emulate, and inject fresh enthusiasm into traditional classroom routines.

3. *Student control.* We believe in returning to students control over what they write. The author of any piece of writing must have final authority over its content and execution.

4. *Writing is teachable.* We believe that while some students may be "born writers," the rest can be taught; that is, that writing skills are teachable. One such skill on which we place strong emphasis is rewriting.

5. *Observation precedes judgment.* If students learn to read and write more observantly, to become conscious of what they and others are doing when they write, they will soon begin to make sounder inferences and also more sense in their own writings and in their interpretations of literature. Moreover, judgments tell them nothing about their own work, only about the reactions of the judge, but observations can help them improve their writing.

6. *Abstract-concrete relationships.* We believe that writing consists of abstract elements and concrete elements and that the ability to percieve relationships among such elements is essential to good reading and writing.

7. *Writing from experience.* We believe that writing from personal experience enables our students to begin concretely and move to the abstract and that an essay may be defined as the statement of an abstract assertion supported concretely by appropriate proofs, examples, etc.

8. *Structured writing experiences.* Finally, we believe that the history of the individual writer recapitulates the history of literature and, therefore, that it is helpful to lead students through a series of structured writing experiences, using forms derived from the oral tradition as preparation for writing essays.

I first applied these tenets to my own teaching in the 1979-80 school year when I taught two sections each term of an elective course: College English. Each section consisted of juniors and seniors. My classroom practices also derive from those I learned in the semihar.

Students do a great deal of reading aloud of their writing, usually in small groups. They can readily understand the rationale for this procedure: No one can make their work sound as good as they can, and letting someone else read it means exposing their errors. In fact, the first step in rewriting often occurs when a student-author *sees* a mistake on paper but *reads* what should have been there.

Another activity is freewriting or non-stop writing, which frees students from all external controls. Here they begin to explore the possibilities of their own intellect and creativity and to dispel the life-long pattern of inhibition that has been imposed on them by traditional writing assignments and by traditional teacher responses: errors circled in red, correction symbols in the margin, and a number or letter at the top telling them how poorly they did the assignment. Freewriting initiates a process of introspection and demonstrates that writing is the only way we can think about something for more than five minutes and impose some order on our mental chaos. Students who freewrite can learn to discriminate their worthwhile thoughts from the worthless ones. By giving them license to write nonsense, we free their minds to focus on sense.

I complement freewriting with the structured forms Marie Ponsot featured in the seminars: fables and family stories.

The fable is a universal form and, in a sense, a primitive one, but its simple two-part structure embodies the distinction between concrete example and abstract thought. My students write fables in order to learn this distinction and because they all can do them. They all know that the lion is king of the jungle, the squirrel is a saver, foxes are foxy, and elephants have long memories.

When a student reads an original fable to a group, the listeners take a few minutes to write down their observations and then we all read them back. Judgments are forbidden, even by the teacher. "It was good," implies the right to say, "It was bad," and students will not read if they fear an attack. This implies a crucial adjustment in the role of the teacher. When a student reads to a group which happens to include me, I make my observations in turn. I do not take advantage of my position by offering praise or criticism. I am there to model the behavior I expect of students so that they can learn to look for the kinds of things I see. Furthermore, when my class is writing, I am writing too, and when my turn comes, I read aloud as they do; my students listen and offer their observations exactly as they do with each other. I might add that I don't grade their writing at all during the first half of the semester.

For variety we listen to a fable without the moral, and each of us infers our own moral from the story. This lends itself to another round of observations or to further practice in rewriting. We also rewrite aphorisms, proverbs, and epigrams—out of context. We treat this as a rather playful activity, to encourage a relaxed approach to writing while promoting originality and creativity in students who think they don't have any. The rewriting of single sentences also becomes a vehicle for developing awareness of sentence structure. Looking at a set of rewrites all based on the same original sentence, we observe the changes made in each new statement, such as the movement from metaphor to literal statement, the insertion of modifiers, the substitution of a more or less specific verb, or the use of a subordinate clause.

We get a lot of mileage out of fable writing, but then we move on to the family story or family parable. This is the kind of story that exists in every family, in oral form. Our students enjoy being the first person to capture in writing a critical moment in the lives of their parents or other ancestors. The force of the untapped material that this assignment brings to the surface never ceases to astonish me. One girl wrote about the time her father, as a child, took from a store some coins that other customers had left to pay for newspapers. Her grandmother put the boy's hand into a flaming stove to punish him. A boy in one class wrote about the time his cousin was reported dead in Vietnam and then came home. Another girl related her grandmother's story of how she had looked out the window where her daughter was standing up on a swing. The daughter, the student's aunt, waved to her mother and consequently fell off the swing and broke her neck.

These stories have a less obvious structure than fables do, but this allows our students to do the shaping. We can teach them to see the implied meaning of the story by asking why their relatives still remember the event and why they tell it to their children. Although the stories tend to be very concrete, they imply abstractions, just as the fable implies its moral. In learning to draw this kind of inference, our students are practicing a skill that is fundamental to all interpretation of literature. When we teachers ask students to write about something they have

heard or read, we want to know what it means to them; we feel frustrated if they only retell the events of the story.

The activities I use in working on family stories include identifying the main character of the story and the most important change that occurs in it, inferring traits of the character from the behavior described, and formulating generalizations about these traits or qualities which are supported and illustrated by events in the story. Students also write expository essays, first based on their own family stories. All these skills are then easily transferred to their readings in literature.

I have been delighted with the results this curriculum produces, and my students, by and large, have also responded positively. Many of them have made significant gains in their writing proficiency, as well as in their willingness to write and in their confidence as writers. Those of us who have been part of the Queens English Project believe that our work in fables and family stories, our de-emphasis of grades and competition in favor of community in the classroom, and our insistence on nonjudgmental observations and on rewriting make our curriculum a unique and successful approach to teaching writing, reading, and thinking skills.

Since this past September, I have been on sabbatical, visiting the other high schools in the Project to observe instruction and serving as liaison to the current directors of the Project, Sandra Schor and Janet Brown of Queens College's English Department. I am also training and counseling the college students who act as tutors in the high schools. They have been indispensable to the program, so valuable that high school principals are now paying for 40 hours of tutoring time per week out of their own budgets. Another measure of the Project's success is that we soon expect a commitment from the superintendent of Queens high schools to continue the funding of Project tutors for the next three years.

THE NEW SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS (1972-1980): A RETROSPECTIVE

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From 1972 to 1980, an unusual interdisciplinary core program, known as The New School of Liberal Arts (NSLA), operated at Brooklyn College. Although that program has recently been replaced by a new college-wide core curriculum, the eight-year experiment deserves a backward glance before being relegated to the annals of forgotten history. In its program design and in the teaching methods used in its classrooms, it embodied many of the ideals we hear currently espoused as directions for the future of postsecondary education. Indeed, NSLA offered a "laboratory" for experimenting with the viability of some new, and new-old, goals of education.

The New School of Liberal Arts was once called in a *Daily News* article "one of the best kept secrets in Brooklyn." It is ironic that in the last year of its existence NSLA caught the attention of The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and was chosen as one of fourteen liberal arts programs to participate in National Project IV, a "collaborative project in which

the participants...provide leadership to postsecondary education, by examining some of the best models of liberal education, and by sharing the results of that examination with others. In selecting NSLA for a grant that would enable evaluation of the program and participation in National Project IV, FIPSE apparently recognized something unusual and challenging in NSLA's program design, something that deserved further study. A brief description of the program should show what made NSLA so interesting.

Resulting from a college-wide commission charged with examining the College's programs in response to student cries for 'meaning' and 'relevance,' NSLA offered Brooklyn College freshmen and sophomores an integrated, non-departmentalized, two-year core program. Each semester students chose one historical time period to study, from a choice of five: Ancient World, Medieval World, Early Modern World, Age of Revolutions, and Twentieth Century. These time periods could be studied in any order. Once having chosen a time period to study, the student selected up to four courses, representing four broad disciplinary approaches: literature, social institutions, arts, sciences. Each course offered four credits, met seminar-style once a week for four hours, and had a maximum enrollment of twenty-five students. Writing was not offered as a separate subject, except to students who failed the CUNY Writing Assessment Test; instead writing was a required component of all courses. Thus, NSLA's curriculum, in 1972, was a very early example of a writing across the curriculum program.

NSLA contrasted vividly both in program design and in philosophy with the educational system operating throughout the rest of Brooklyn College, most of CUNY, indeed most large universities throughout the country. By being relatively small (opening with 532 freshmen and designed to peak at about 1000 students) and by being self-contained, separate from the rest of the college, NSLA could give students a sense of belonging, of having a home on campus. This sense of community was reinforced by the small class size; one student put it this way in a letter to the President of the College: 'Due to the small classes, the faculty is able to take time to become acquainted with each and every student. The relationships that develop between faculty and students encourage the students to perform to their highest potential.' Or as another student put it, 'You're not just another number.' (This concept of community has turned out to be a major theme in many National Project IV programs.)

Within the supportive community established at NSLA, students were presented with a challenging curriculum, modeled, according to its designers, along the lines of well-known programs at Columbia, Harvard, Chicago, and St. John's. Faculty did not shy from assigning difficult 'classics,' such as *The Odyssey*, *The Tempest*, or *Das Kapital*, to entering freshmen. Faculty avoided survey approaches, leaned heavily toward primary sources, depended upon class discussion rather than lecture, actively encouraged the development of critical thinking, integrated writing into the content of their courses, and held up 'high expectations' for their students. As one faculty member put it, 'I want you to feel comfortable, relaxed, so I can ask you to do some damned hard work.'

NSLA's curriculum, based on the study of historical time periods, reinforced the sense of 'high expectations.' While its historical time periods betray a Western European orientation and suggest that the faculty had defined for itself, somewhat restrictively, a 'common body of

knowledge,' the curriculum was never static or rigid. Faculty were given remarkable freedom in designing their courses: they could design a course to parallel that of another faculty member; they could explore a single topic or several themes; they could include non-Western materials. What, with all their variety, bound these courses together was the invitation they implicitly extend to students: come, immerse yourselves in another world, another time, another place. Because students did not have to elect courses in chronological order, they were not so much aware of temporal patterns as of cultural contrasts—whether between ancient and modern astrology, between medieval manor life and Arabic tribal organization, or between socialism and capitalism. This emphasis on cultures accounted for the increased tolerance and awareness of the world reported by students looking back on their NSLA experience.

Despite its elitist ideals (in its early days NSLA was dubbed "Amherst on Fulton Street"), the curriculum proved remarkably adaptable to a diverse student population. While most of our students, particularly after 1976, entered with high school averages between 80 and 90, a small group were honors students and another small group entered having failed all three CUNY assessment tests. For the underprepared students, we adapted NSLA's curriculum and created what became known as the Preparatory Year Program. Offered most years in two time periods, Age of Revolutions and Ancient World, the Preparatory Year Program stretched NSLA literature and social institutions courses out over a year, and added basic skills workshops in reading and writing and a counseling component. It was a highly integrated program, in the sense that faculty worked as a team with the same group of students for the entire year: basic skills teachers used the readings of the content courses, and teachers in the content courses reinforced basic skills.

The NSLA evaluation, sponsored by FIPSE, paid particular attention to the Prep Program. We did a case study of the Ancient World Prep Program offered in 1979-80 and did 74 telephone interviews of former 'graduates' of the program. While our Prep students did no better on CUNY Reading and Writing Assessment Tests than other underprepared CUNY students, our retention rates were high. For the 1974-75 group of students, 79.3% of those initially enrolled completed the program (46 out of 58); in 1975-76 the figure was 77.5% (62 out of 80); in 1976-77, it was 79% (45 out of 57); in 1977-78, it was 78.6% (11 out of 14); and in 1978-79, 91% (60 out of 66). Of those students who completed the Prep Year Program from 1974 to 1979, a study of 222 transcripts (of 224 who completed the program) shows 192 (86%) enrolled for a third semester of college.

The telephone interviews were able to document important attitudinal changes in students who completed the Prep Program: development of self-confidence and a positive self-image; the broadening of perspective or world view. New work habits, self-discipline, and better control of basic skills brought about a more realistic assessment of one's abilities and greater self-confidence.

Changes in attitude toward the world, as reported by former Prep Year students, were undoubtedly the consequence of the curricular focus on history and comparative culture. As one student put it: "...in high school I never liked Social Studies, but in the Prep Year we studied many cultures around the world, and I've learned to appreciate...different cultures." Or another:

"Integration led to understanding culture in a deeper way.' Frequently, the descriptions of changes in attitude toward the world were accompanied by metaphors of 'closed' minds and "opened" minds, reflecting new perspectives on the world and increased tolerance for ideas different from their own.

Another aspect of NSLA's evaluation for FIPSE looked at classroom methodologies: how were faculty, both in the "regular" NSLA courses and in the Prep Year courses, able to maintain their "high expectations" even while addressing skills? Two aspects of NSLA's program design pushed faculty to find new ways to approach the classics: the four-hour class and the requirement to teach writing in all disciplines. Faculty used a variety of techniques to do this. Their repertoire included student performance, use of contemporary issues, museum visits, life histories, small group discussions, videotaping, and so forth, but primary focus was on questioning and class discussion. Faculty wanted students to talk, not just for self-expression, but to exercise logic and learn to key discussion to a text. The same goals applied to writing; in fact, writing, whether analysis of student papers or in-class writing, became another element of the faculty's repertoire of methods to encourage the development of active learners. By incorporating writing into the instruction in all disciplines, faculty became aware of how students think, and they had a measure of the degree of student engagement with the material. I quote from the analysis of faculty responses to a questionnaire item on how critical thinking was taught:

> To confront new ideas and concepts arising in class, instructors sometimes 'encourage students to rely on their own visual and intellectual comprehension of course material,' and thereby reinforce content and insist upon individual, active thought. 'Such skills are improved by working on problems and issues in class and in papers and essays...and by trying to make the reasoning explicit in these cases.' One instructor emphasized 'organizing knowledge in various hierarchical and equivalent categories' while another stated: 'Teaching thinking is really what I am trying to do.'

There were those who doubted our ability to teach the traditional subject matter of the humanities to our present students. The most frequent encountered response to NSLA's program when described to outsiders was disbelief. This was not an issue confined to The New School of Liberal Arts. In 1970, the City College English Department, like many of us who faced the sudden implementation of Open Admissions policy, asked, as Theodore Gross reported it: How can those of us "trained for an elitist profession...perform democratic tasks?' How can we assign Shakespeare to students not yet trained to speak standard English? NSLA's experience suggests to us, a little more than a decade later, that the traditional subject matter of the humanities can be presented to our "diverse" student body. More specifically, it was the context in which that subject matter was presented—the programs we provided, the design of our courses, and our classroom methodologies—that determined NSLA's success.

THE SEEK PRE-FRESHMAN SUMMER PROGRAM AT LEHMAN COLLEGE

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The SEEK Pre-Freshman Summer Program at Lehman College, an academic program designed for a group of from 50 to 60 students, combined the belief that incoming students would profit most from an intensive college experience with an awareness that instructors had to deal with student behaviors and attitudes that severely hampered and even precluded a productive educational experience. It was apparent to the staff that before effective education could take place, students had to alter their self-perceptions and their perceptions of the educational process. We embarked on what is described as "contextual transformation," that is, changing the context in which students view themselves by compelling them to become conscious choicemakers, responsible for and to themselves. At the same time, they cease to see themselves as victims, externally controlled, defeated by their own unexamined belief systems that have severely impeded their functioning successfully.

With this counseling model as a starting point, the staff planned an integrated program in which counselors played a major role in the cognitive process and instructors participated fully in the affective process.

Planning

One of the first tasks was to select content material that would focus on and illuminate the themes of identity, responsibility for self, decisionmaking, control of time, and education as a form of self-transformation. These themes constantly recur in counseling sessions, but often are peripheral as content themes in reading and writing courses.

In addition, we needed the implied consent of all faculty to subordinate individual styles and interests to common goals and purposes. In the abstract, this idea was readily agreed upon during our initial meetings. However, it took the intensive planning sessions in June and the actual implementation of the six-week program itself for us to know that our approach was not only sound, but also that it did not threaten us as professionals from different areas. After all, the sanctity of the classroom would be invaded. We certainly all knew each other as peers; we were used to exchanging ideas, even inured to semi-annual observations. However, exposing our methods and styles every day was indeed another matter.

And so the days and weeks spent in planning were crucial. We had all agreed that if students could in the space of six weeks make significant progress in understanding themselves as individuals, as students, as responsible members of a society, we would be more effectively preparing them for college life than by simply teaching them to improve their skills. This pre-summer planning process and the ongoing daily planning and evaluation we built into our schedules provided us with the courage to cohere and the real excitement of a purposeful team effort. The luxury of time—the opportunity to really work together—is a gift not often given, but so often needed during the academic year.

Materials

In order to base a reasonable and respectable college-level curriculum on these affective aims, we had to emphasize that the purpose of education is to bring students into contact with the realities of self and the external world. Most courses have these goals as their underlying agenda; students often think this agenda is hidden or non-existent. And so the course materials had to be very carefully selected. This was no simple task and in the arduous selection process, we had ample opportunity to express our disparate points of view—we were stubborn, we cajoled, we shouted, we submitted. In the end, we came up with materials we all accepted and we gave not only our 'implied' consent, but our explicit consent to subordinate our individual style and interests so that the common goal would never lose priority. The objectives we sought were:

Writing Objectives:

- The ability to summarize in paragraph form an essay of exposition.
- The ability to plan and write a short essay of exposition responding to questions based on readings, including the following skills:
  - Formulating a thesis statement.
  - Formulating appropriate topic sentences.
  - Supporting both the thesis and topic sentences with specific details.
- Improvement of syntactical and punctuation skills, emphasizing sentence boundaries, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and possessives.
- The ability to write an in-class essay exam.

Reading Objectives:

- Improvement of vocabulary and use of dictionary and thesaurus.
- Ability to recognize thesis and evidence in expository prose.
- Improvement of comprehension (as shown by scores on a standardized test).
- Ability to outline selections of expository prose.
- Improvement in taking lecture notes.

Counseling Objectives:

- Developing responsibility for one's own educational development.
- Developing self-awareness of one's own personal values, skills, abilities, interests, and traits.
- Integrating feelings, thoughts, and actions as they relate to educational goals.
- Attaining mastery of certain life skills, such as problem solving, time management, decision making, critical thinking, and achievement skills.

Logistics

Everything that followed grew out of intensive cooperation, shared effort, and a willingness to demonstrate and model these cognitive and affective lessons being taught. In actual practice, the program employed seven staff: two reading instructors, two writing instructors, two counselors, and a program director, who was also a counselor. We had an ideal situation: the 60 stu-

dents were divided into two groups—each with a reading teacher, a writing teacher, and a counselor. Since the syllabus had been minutely planned and each class meeting was followed by a staff meeting to report the session's progress, it was possible, when the need arose, to combine or shift sections without loss of momentum.

In addition, this arrangement allowed for a considerable degree of flexibility. If the reading teacher, for example, needed more than the usual 50 minutes to complete a lesson, it could be done. If a writing teacher had a particularly successful method, then both groups could be combined as one. If we wanted to bring in a guest lecturer or have students from one group work along with the other group, these arrangements could be made. In short, we were not limited to the restrictions of a bell schedule.

Skills

In teaching academic skills, we utilized the similar aims of reading and writing. Both reading and writing instructors, for example, are concerned with thesis and evidence. Throughout the six weeks, readings were analyzed with extreme care, not only for thesis, but for structure and organization, and writing assignments were provided which would indicate the students' comprehension of content and their ability to translate that content into well-organized essays. When a poem such as "The Unknown Citizen" was considered, students ferreted out Auden's implied thesis about conformity in the modern age. When these same students were asked to write a narrative about a particular instance in their lives in which they did or did not conform, they were able to discover an implied thesis within their own narratives. It was then possible for them to make that thesis explicit, to create a rudimentary thesis-and-evidence paper using narrative as the basis of support. Our aim was to help our students define their ideas, their tasks, their responsibilities, and to provide them with strategies for success. We wanted to move them from being passive recipients of education to active learners, able to articulate their real problems and needs and, therefore, able to cope with them.

Because what we taught was real, we saw changes. Though specific training for the CUNY placement tests was not a goal in itself, a number of students made enough progress in their writing and reading test scores to be exempted from study skills courses and to enroll in regular freshman composition courses in the fall. There were other even more significant indicators of student progress. For example, during the fourth week, students had to survey and outline a difficult chapter on socialization from a sociology text. Many spent 10 or 12 hours doing this over a particularly sweltering summer weekend. Although the task was one they had never done before and although they were tempted by other activities, they all stuck to and finally felt challenged by the assignment. Perhaps more telling was the extent to which they were able to apply the ideas of the chapter to their own lives and to the lives of those around them.

When as a final assignment we asked them to read a thickly textured story, "Private Lives" by Joyce Carol Oates, after having already read difficult expository material by Rollo May and Erich Fromm, class discussion surpassed our expectations. While we allowed the discussion to be open-ended and non-directed, the students arrived at their own structure, offering their own experiences and reformulating main ideas from all the readings; in short, they synthesized the summer's academic work. The students challenged one another's ideas, and ours too. We felt

they had become adult learners, in control of their own academic and personal lives.

What can we take from our experience? Though total replication of a program such as this is not possible, some of its features could be applied at most CUNY colleges. Teaching paired classes is a good model that can take a number of forms: pairing reading and writing courses; pairing freshman orientation with either a reading or a writing course; pairing reading and writing courses whose content supports counseling goals. We feel a core curriculum that stresses reading and writing in the content areas is highly effective. Finally, we know that what we must address is our typical remedial student's self-image.

CWAT IS THE MATTER: STUDENTS AND THE DILEMMAS OF MINIMALISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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An important effect of the CWAT (CUNY Writing Assessment Test) is pressure for a quick fix in writing instruction. Both ESL learners and native speakers suffer as minimum competency tests more often than not produce minimalist approaches in remedial programs. Once the tests become structured into curriculum, the goal of passing these tests becomes paramount in the minds of students. Instructors find it harder and harder themselves to resist this view, particularly after administration comes to consider the development of skills beyond the competences required by the tests as "extras" or "frills." We are compelled to give more instruction within a narrower range of competences, and when we have trouble getting our students ready for success on these tests, the minimalist spirit seizes us and encourages us to believe that a certain number of basic skills are, in fact, terminal skills for many of the students now seeking higher education at CUNY.

Proponents of broadly conceived developmental programs are correct when they indicate how such programs really help students to get to fluency and accuracy in a systematic way. And much more, because developmental programs can have an open-ended, 'language for life' approach which does not close the door on those who have merely managed to pass a minimum competency test. These programs often provide a full variety of language experiences for students at different levels of competence. Unfortunately, if such programs wish to survive in the present atmosphere of minimalism, they will be driven to modify considerably what they have been doing because administration will effectively argue that the objective of getting students to pass the test will be adequately served by an intensive, narrowly focused effort, at far less expense.

We know that there is no way a seriously unprepared writer can master technically accurate forms and write with a polished rhetorical strategy after one or even two semesters of training. The actual form and content of the CWAT make minimalism inevitable because instruction will have to be geared to getting reasonably accurate and coherent 50-minute essays of persuasion.

The students will have to learn a preordained task, namely a predetermined way of analyzing a topic and making a minimal, safe elaboration of it in a predetermined form. Outside of this framework, unpredictable language may burst forth with a resultant loss of syntactic control, and coherence will surely suffer as well. So we will instruct our unprepared writers, including those for whom English is a first language, that crawling comes before walking, and even though a good number of them have been walking for years, in an admittedly unacceptable, even inchoate manner, it is time to go back to the crawl to learn an orderly, self-limiting posture from which mature walking may some day spring.

The content of remedial composition courses has been profoundly affected by the CWAT. The minimalist perspective reduces our options even when the test is not directly tied to the objectives of a given course. As educators, we may have spent some time following research on composition and experimenting in our own classes. We may have come to believe that it is a good thing for a student to have the opportunity to write a lot in a variety of types of writing. We may have been persuaded that fluency comes first, accuracy second. We may believe that thinking and writing proceed side by side. It may have even crossed our minds that reading activities that encourage the development of critical thinking skills are related to increased sophistication in writing, particularly when reading and writing are in some way connected. These considerations create a deep dilemma for instructors who are expected to get students ready for the test, or to get them ready to move into the course that gets them ready for the test. How much of what we believe to be valuable course work must be reduced in scope or abandoned because of the test? How many of us will be compelled to teach courses whose content must be shaped with the knowledge that the writing test is the only instrument to determine whether a student may pass? Some of us already are compelled to do just that.

The ESL classroom is by far the classroom most seriously affected by the minimum competency tests. As the tests encroach upon curriculum, continually narrowing the options of classroom teachers, the urgent need of ESL students for a large repertory of communicative competences will remain unfilled. The linguistic foundation that native speakers possess is still developing in all but a few second-language learners. Yet this process is skewed by the minimalist approach. Rational movement toward fluency in all skills areas is out of the question as linguistic minorities in CUNY come to realize that they cannot afford the time to develop a broad range of competences. This not only applies to the listening and speaking practice so crucial for second-language learners in general, but also to the special reading and writing activities through which the socio-cultural framework of their new language is made accessible. These are, of course, 'givens' of our profession; yet they are about to become "extras" very much the way reading enrichment and a broad variety of writing activities become "extras" for the native speaker in reading and writing classes hooked to the reading and writing tests.

The special trouble ESL students have in passing the CRAT (CUNY Reading Assessment Test) and the CWAT invests these tests with special powers. Even more than native speakers, ESL students accept the tests as a turning point intimately connected with success in college, and ESL teachers feel even more pressed than regular reading and composition teachers to focus merely on the narrow range of skills needed to pass the tests. This reductionist impulse is apparent even at the lower levels of ESL instruction where the teacher feels obliged to redirect

classroom activities because the CWAT and the CRAT are looming on the horizon.

I have chosen to mention reading and the CRAT together with writing and the CWAT because my thesis about minimalism was shaped by an understanding of how both tests had degraded instruction and altered the learning environment in both remedial and ESL classes for the worse. There is, happily, a growing concern among faculty about the split between reading and writing, and not only in the ESL situation. In another forum I would argue in detail how the CRAT trivializes the teaching and learning of reading and thinking skills, and makes it very hard to have a sound, thoroughgoing reading program for all students.

It can now be seen how the CWAT has and will have a harmful effect on reading instruction incidental to the harm being done by the CRAT. The traditional prestige of composition and the need of all students to prepare eventually for English department requirements has made the CWAT the dominant, the culminating examination and has caused a downgrading of reading. Certainly the circumstances surrounding this downgrading vary from campus to campus. They may involve struggles over turf between basic skills departments and English departments. They may involve philosophical differences within English departments, or even the power of college councils to impose unpleasant choices on English or skills departments. In the end, reading loses out, and so do those students who desperately need reading enrichment and the critical thinking skills that accompany it.

The ESL students are very special victims of this process. As second-language learners, they cannot possibly get ready for the CWAT in a short time. The tremendous amount of energy and time they will spend seeking accuracy and fluency on the CWAT ought to be distributed more rationally among all skills areas. In this regard it is noteworthy that ESL students are often quite capable of a breakthrough in reading and thinking skills even at a time when their writing needs a lot more development. The eventual writing of such students will be far superior to the formula essay the native speaker now learns to write to get a '4-4' on the CWAT. Yet as long as minimalism is in the saddle, we can scarcely expect these considerations to get a hearing.

Many faculty have known from the start that the CWAT and the CRAT are largely irrelevant to success in college, especially when we consider the broad range of competences our students need for academic success. Others emphasized at first that the tests had merit to the extent that they would persuade certain faculties to set up viable skills programs and impose minimum standards. It was argued that a minimum competency test, seemingly putting the burden on the student, actually imposed a burden of accountability on the faculty who were expected to deliver the goods. It is not comforting to learn that this view has proved illusory. As the tests take hold, and we come to serve them, we should not avoid making the connection between the financial crunch and the minimalist goal imposed on so many students at our colleges.

I urge you to consider the social and political implications of a back-to-basics movement on a college level. Is it too much to expect that all we have learned in the last fifteen years about composition, about reading, and especially about language will enable us to reject such a movement by shaping a very different educational format?

TERROR AND EXPECTATIONS: SPREADING THE GOSPEL OF OPEN ADMISSIONS

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When I began teaching Freshman Composition at Queens College almost a decade ago, I had no idea of the gre.. social experiment into which I was being drafted. Of course, I realize my experience does not represent all of CUNY throughout the 1970's. After all, I was an eager-beaver ABD, hungry for a job in an increasingly tight job market and anxious to climb up the academic ladder if only I could find a foothold. In short, need and opportunism were my spurs. At Queens College, fortunately, I met some imaginative and enthusiastic faculty who ran meetings for part-timers. During that year, I was preoccupied with commuting from Brooklyn, completing the dissertation, and coping with the culture shock of New York. Nevertheless, I can still recall vividly the impressions made on me by teachers such as Bob Lyons, Don McQuade, and Sandra Schor. From them I gained the basic CUNY perspective on teaching composition; and the horror of discovering that graduate school had taught me nothing about teaching composition was balanced by the rational hope and foundation for a systematic and sympathetic approach to teaching writing.

The next year, I received a full-time appointment at Hostos Community College. The three years at Hostos were among the most politically explosive for CUNY. Sometimes, in my dreams, I still hear the chants of numerous demonstrations held in front of City Hall, on East 80th Street before the Board of Higher Education, or on the littered streets of the South Bronx. Windowless classrooms were crowded with earnest Blacks and Hispanics who struggled with the powers of punctuation and agreement and to whom the orderliness of English grammar appeared as chaotic and ungovernable as the other forces surrounding their lives. Disrupting the instruction on paragraphing was the continual buzz of little politics being maneuvered along the college corridors and big politics up in Albany. At Hostos I learned my second major lesson, that the individual's meager efforts in teaching English were much more than an educational matter; specifically, that teaching Open Admissions students was a socially radical and potentially revolutionary activity. In order to teach successfully, I had to abandon the elitist presumption which had brought me to college teaching; the traditional, if unspoken, assumpti.. s I had carried from my own college days just did not apply anymore. Like other academics I knew, I had entered college teaching believing that it was a prestigious profession which offered a safe, harmonious life in which one could read, write, and converse about ideas far from the turmoil and trivialities of ordinary society. At Hostos, I discovered that teaching was frequently dull and repetitious, that I seldom had time or opportunity to discuss in class anything beyond the ordinary fare offered in composition textbooks, and that dealing with first-generation, working-class, minority students was sometimes risky and often filled with conflict. It became clear to me then that I had fallen into a profession entirely different from the one I had chosen. I discovered that social purpose must infuse the teacher of Open Admissions students; elitism must be replaced by egalitarian pride, prestige by missionary fervor. I began to feel a strong social mission to a class of students who had never seen themselves (in the jargon of that period) as "college material" and who, for the first time in history, were given the opportunity to succeed in higher education. The keyword

of that mission was "succeed." So what if many of them read below an eighth-grade level, if they misspelled copiously, wrote only fragments, and never heard of paragraphs? They were the victims of an uncaring school system, cultural deprivation, and ghetto poverty. They were also amazingly motivated, street-wise, and almost always—and this was and still is the primary credo—capable of learning. This conversion was easy for me: I had been myself a first-generation, working-class, minority college student.

After CUNY, I went to teach at Westchester Community College in 1976. At that time many of the WCC senior faculty approached me as a 'remedial specialist', their attitude was that I possessed techniques which would allow me to teach the Open Admissions students successfully. At the same time, I observed that the lower-level courses were taught generally by only a small group of junior faculty. It was obvious to me that the department considered these courses non-prestigious and that for a number of years after the inception of Open Admissions the department had been divided into its elite faculty, teaching electives and upper-level courses, and second-class faculty teaching the Open Admissions students.

Why had this split occurred? After my hard years at CUNY, I saw the WCC faculty as experiencing a special kind of terror, the unarticulated but ever-present fear rising from the social implications embedded in teaching Open Admissions students. In my opinion, the terror was not a result of their inability to teach at this level, although frequently they explained their reluctance as rising from their absence of skills in this area. They were, after all, intelligent and experienced teachers. On the contrary, their helplessness before the Open Admissions population was a consequence of their terror, a disabling anxiety created by the barely conscious recognition that their traditional social status as college professors was threatened by this new population.

Many academics think they are what they teach. Also, especially in community colleges which are among the lowest ranked institutions in higher education, many faculty members tend to place great importance on whatever small signs of academic prestige they possess. The segregation of faculty teaching remedial courses from the rest of the department, the 'ghettoizing' of remedial and lower-level courses, and the anger, reluctance, helplessness of certain faculty members when faced with the possibility of teaching Open Admissions students were all elements closely related to the general perception that remedial courses were heavily subscribed with working-class and minority students and that their content was more closely akin to high school instruction. In refusing to teach Open Admissions students, individuals were fighting against what they considered a de facto decline in their social class; they were struggling to keep intact their intellectual and academic images of themselves. Clearly what the department needed was not more innovative techniques in teaching remedial writing but a change in its attitude towards Open Admissions. The terror of becoming declasse, of losing professional and social standing, had to be countered; the spirit of social mission had to be spread.

CUNY was obviously the model for us to study. CUNY colleges were geographically close; they were setting up successful programs for Open Admissions students; more importantly, these programs were gaining regional and national prominence. A number of CUNY professors were actually doing research and publishing in the area of remedial and freshman English; they were proof that teaching Open Admissions students was not only respectable but also could be

intellectually demanding and prestigious. A stream of speakers from CUNY gradually helped to change faculty attitude: Bob Lyons and Don McQuade from Queens College, Ken Bruffee from Brooklyn College, Richard L. Larson from Lehman. What was important was not the specific techniques they presented but their underlying philosophies concerning Open Admissions.

Once teaching the Open Admissions students became professionally respectable, the department's energies could focus on changing policies, innovating programs, and sharing techniques and ideas in teaching. In four years, from 1976 to 1980, the department has set up a writing center, revised the freshman sequence to include a developmental writing course, instituted a holistic exit exam for remedial students, implemented a rhetoric course in which students tutor as part of their course work, received a two-year grant offering faculty and tutorial assistance to students showing academic potential, and accepted a rotation system in which all faculty will have to teach some remedial and lower-level courses. Lastly, almost all instructors now see the importance and worth of their work with Open Admissions students; as one full professor remarked at a recent department meeting, "These students need the best teachers among us."

ABSTRACTS

Dialectics in a High School Writing Center: Strategies and Structures for Collaborative Learning
Carol Albanese-Bay, English Department, James Madison High School

Collaborative learning can be a philosophical tool which can tremendously increase the effectiveness of teachers of writing. Based upon the assumption that students have something to teach each other, collaborative learning can be extended to its maximum efficiency in the training and employment of peer tutors. At the Writing Center at Madison High School, a peer tutoring program has been in effect for the past two years, and during that time a model tutor-training program has evolved.

Tutor-training occurs in a writing workshop in which students with superior skills write, read their writing aloud to each other, and learn to respond objectively and sensitively. Freewriting, group writing, and writing in pairs are offered as supplements and alternatives to such traditional approaches as outlining and exposition from topic sentences. Because these are students who have learned to cope effectively with conventional forms, peer tutors initially question the value of less structured writing approaches. A healthy questioning session ensues. Students engage in a dialectic in which they confront each other's fallacies around the "mysteries" of the creative process. They begin to record, share, and analyze the complexities of their own writing processes, discovering that writing is not an innate talent, but a skill which can be cultivated.

After three to four weeks of experimentation, tutors begin to review actual tutee samples to prepare for the exigencies of the tutoring situation. The tutee population consists of students on a variety of levels, some with desperate remediation needs. Through role-playing and discussion, peer tutors are encouraged further to examine their own prejudices and preconceptions. At the end of six weeks, tutors begin their work, confidently, knowing that they are part of a process, and need not know all the answers.

Reading and Writing on the Sentence Level
Tom Anselmo, Writing and Speech Department, and Ellen Weber, Developmental Skills Department, New York City Technical College

The impetus for this study was our discovery that the complexity of a sentence often interferes with understanding in reading and that the kinds of sentences that cause students difficulty in their reading are absent in their writing. Perhaps this absence accounts for some of the incoherence in their writing. If so, incoherence in writing may often be the result of a limited writing repertoire, specifically of limited syntactic options.

To go beyond a general impression to a more systematic understanding of what factors in sentences actually cause problems for basic skills students, we developed a sentence comprehension instrument consisting of ten sentences containing subordinate elements, sentence embeddings, and coordinate structures. Thus, the various degrees of complexity were based on the organizational structure and the structural depth of the sentences. The student's task was to choose a paraphrase of the central meaning of the sentence.

In comparing the sentence comprehension scores with general reading scores, we found—descriptively—that they correlate well with scores at the highest and lowest ranges. The correla-

tion between the students' sentence comprehension scores and the CUNY assessment essay marks was across the whole range of scores.

More importantly, we found that in examining the kinds of wrong responses on the sentence test, we were able to predict a host of writing problems. For example, those students who made premature inferences on the sentence test generally strayed from their essay topic. And those students who could not distinguish between the main and subordinate elements on the sentence test did not use appropriate subordinating signals in their writing; instead, they simply strung most ideas together with the ubiquitous "and."

Certainly, what is needed for these students is a program in the analysis of the way the sentence works. This means learning sentence parts, manipulating them in all combinations, and combining thoughts with an overriding idea in mind. It is our hunch that in experiencing the immediacy of the demands of coordination and subordination within the extended sentence, remedial students will be better able to comprehend in reading and to control in writing the larger organizational elements of an article or essay.

Students as Teachers: An Experimental Speech Class
Sophie Balcoff, ESL Program, City College

In teaching speech, I found that having students give speeches in front of the class didn't work well. Students were scared to take risks and had little motivation to communicate. Students who listened, realizing they were not being "communicated to," lost interest. The kind of "defensive learning"—learning as conforming to requirements; teacher as hurler of darts—that students got from my corrections at such a time was surely lost once they left the classroom.

In order to reduce my students' anxiety and to increase their motivation to talk, as well as to increase each student's "talking time," I arranged the class in mixed-language groups, ranging from dyads to half the class. Students gave speeches within groups on topics about which they had become experts, for example, a poem in their native language, an article studied in one group and presented to another, an interview conducted outside class about a job they were interested in. These "experts" had the satisfying role of teacher as the sharer of knowledge. The listeners, responsible for handing in summaries or passing quizzes on the material presented, also acted as teachers, questioning persistently and even correcting the speakers by forcing them to be precise. Students were thus corrected because they had failed to communicate. Such corrections should "stick" better than those which evoke the reflex of "defensive learning."

Literacy, the Oral Tradition, and the Autonomous Code
Thelma Borodkin, Academic Skills/SEEK Department, Lehman College

The existence of our form of government depends on having informed, literate citizens. Many modern urban students come from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds which are mainly based on an oral tradition. They meet great difficulty when they are required to write in Edited American English (EAE) or what Paul Kay calls "the autonomous code." The features of this code are consistently absent from the writing of these students, who make up the bulk of the basic writing population.

In this paper, based on my research under an NEH-funded grant, I listed the features of the autonomous code, as described by Kay in his article "Language Evolution and Speech Style" (in *Sociocultural Dimensions of Language Change*, New York, 1977) to show how the autonomous code evolved in modern times as the *lingua franca* of the educated community. I also showed how the features of the autonomous code seem to be elicited by written literacy. To support the view that literacy elicits the autonomous code, I cited passages from the Bible, the first known writing done by people of an oral tradition. Participants then read and discussed student writing to find both support for this thesis and suggestions for future courses of action.

CUNY Exported
John Brereton, English Department, Wayne State University

As one who spent the 1970's as a writing teacher at CUNY and now directs a writing program in another university, I can best explain what I see as the impact of CUNY by making six separate points:

1. People outside of New York tend to think of a "CUNY approach" or a "CUNY method" for teaching writing, and particularly basic writing. Such thinking tends to obscure the rich diversity of CUNY in the 1970's, when many different approaches flourished, some in harmony, some in competition.

2. A corollary to my first point is that people tend to think that because a book or idea or article is from someone at CUNY, it must be right on target. But surely we all know that what works at one branch with one department may be quite inappropriate in another borough, with other students. Part of the excitement of CUNY was in adapting so many different ideas; it involved a richness of approaches, of methods, of ideologies. And surely what produced so much of the good work was the need to decide, right away, if one's colleagues were on the right track, if their ideas would work in one's own setting.

Those two points were about how CUNY was and is viewed. Now for what I think added to CUNY's real stature.

3. Anyone from CUNY knows, just knows, that basic writing can be taught well, with responsibility and with success. This is still news to much of the nation, but it pervaded CUNY for the past decade. Does it still?

4. CUNY spent the time and money necessary for success. Heaven knows it was never enough, but the large investments at the beginning, when it really counted, made the ensuing achievements possible. Anyone who has been at CUNY understands the kind of serious commitment needed to do the job.

5. CUNY rewarded work in basic writing. Careers could be built on solid achievements in the field, as the impressive number of research reports, articles, and texts demonstrate. CUNY's reputation would not be what it is if instructors had not been able to connect their research with their teaching. Elsewhere, English departments still insist on a narrow version of research, meaning that people who teach mostly composition are often forced to do their major research in literature, and composition research that does get done is insufficiently regarded.

6. Most of all, CUNY took basic writing students seriously. Their writing, weak as it often was, became better in time only because teachers cared. That kind of attention to basic writing was not unique to CUNY, of course. What was unique was the amount of attention they received at so many levels, from classroom teachers to department chairs to deans.

I don't want to paint too rosy a picture of CUNY. Any faculty member could point to examples of neglect, insensitivity, lack of support, and plain bad judgment. But when it comes to widely shared attitudes, to a group of lively, dedicated teachers and writers, then CUNY provided an incomparable setting for engagement with the successes and failures of a whole generation of college writers. Those are the attitudes Open Admissions at CUNY has exported, and that is where the impact of Open Admissions at CUNY will have its greatest effect.

Parameters of Urban Bilingualism: The Writing Monitor
Donald R. H. Byrd, English Language Center, LaGuardia Community College

Urban bilingual adults constitute a unique population that has not been widely researched. The existing treatments focus descriptively on the pedagogical needs of this population. This paper projects four areas where current theory in second-language acquisition can be applied to this enigmatic bilingual group.

1. The use of an approximative form of English, fixed and highly formulaic, suggests pidginization.

2. Little scrutiny for correctness of English usage, fluency notwithstanding, could be instances of faulty monitoring.

3. The ability to communicate orally (to send and receive messages) without total linguistic precision supports the distinction made between communicative and linguistic competence.

4. An individualistic view of themselves and the world around them (where a restricted speech code may be used) points to attitudinal eccentricities.

While reporting on various studies in the four areas above, this paper also suggests areas of needed research. Pedagogical points and themes for materials appropriate to adult bilingual students in the inner city are also made.

Errors and Evolutions
Robert Carling, English Department, Lehman College

The evolution of the writing program at Lehman College spans twelve years. During that time we have tried, through trial and error, many course sequences and instructional approaches. Here I want to emphasize *error*: errors made, those we avoided, and what we learned from our errors.

In 1968 with the introduction of the SEEK Program, volunteer instructors from the English Department were impressed by the potential of a new kind of student. When students failed to meet the standards of English 101, they were passed on the basis of potential rather than performance, so the program added a level of instruction *after* 101, only to find such a solution dishonest and unworkable.

In 1970 with the beginning of Open Admissions, we corrected our error; we added instructional levels below English 101. Although we did not create separate sections for SEEK students, we did establish equivalent courses in separate English and Academic Skills Departments. The problems we failed to address were the need for an ESL program, a tutoring program, and a writing laboratory.

By 1973 we had learned that freshman composition instruction now required two semesters, with a uniform examination as the "exit" standard. All members of the English Department now taught composition, and an ESL program was instituted.

During the New York City budget crisis in 1975, the program continued to develop with greater involvement of full-time members of the English Department and development of remedial pedagogy in the Academic Skills Department.

The introduction of the CUNY Writing Assessment Test (CWAT) in 1978 provided an essential objective instrument to control movement from remedial to college-level courses. We avoided the temptation to sabotage CWAT results to ensure enrollment numbers in both English and Academic Skills courses. Instead, the test helped us to refine a two-course remedial sequence and a two-course college-level sequence.

At present, our program continues to develop. We now have a writing across the curriculum program, an ESL program college-wide, the New York City Writing Project, and a peer tutoring program. However, we still lack an adequate writing laboratory. Moreover, we still need to find ways to retain a sufficient number of students long enough to prepare them to complete college successfully.

The Dictionary as a Learning Aid
Maryann F. Castelucci, English Department, College of Staten Island

Remedial reading students can learn how to use the dictionary by applying traditional procedures as a way of moving from the known to the unknown. Through this technique, they can develop a better sense of themselves as learners.

First, I dictate words that are not spelled the way they sound (e.g., gnome, phenomena, wrest, feign, xenophobia) and instruct the students to write down what they hear. Then, they look up the syllabication, definition, and forms of each word.

One word that most students have success with is "phenomena." They are familiar enough with the digraph "ph" to get to the spelling of that word. Then, with some reflection, they can go on to "phlebitis." Increased awareness also enables them to sound out the syllabified words and come to an understanding of pronunciation. For example, after they notice that the two "i's" in "phlebitis" are represented by different diacritical marks, students express uncertainty about the sound of each one. If they are then asked to find in the dictionary the sound of the "i" in a word such as "kind," they will realize that the micron in that word represents the same sound as the first "i" in "phlebitis." Through similar reasoning, they will discover how to pronounce the second "i" in that word.

Once remedial reading students know that on their own they have the ability to gain new information, the instructor will discover some positive changes in the classroom. Many students will assume a more positive attitude about themselves as readers. This new attitude will, in turn, have positive effects on their motivation. Most importantly, it will encourage them to assume responsibility for their own learning.

Basic Writing at Bronx: A Reasonable Response
Marsha Z. Cummins, English Department, Bronx Community College

The English Department at Bronx Community College (BCC) developed ideas in its writing program that in many ways anticipated those which Open Admissions would bring to the rest of CUNY. Bronx opened its doors in 1959, and by 1962 the English Department realized that a sizable number of its students were "non-traditional" and needed both a basic writing course and a developmental reading course. At this time the English Department began giving placement exams similar to the CUNY WAT exam, asking for an essay on a familiar subject, read holistically by at least two instructors.

With the growth of the college came the inevitable splintering, and by 1970, the reading and the newly created ESL courses were part of a department other than the English Department. Almost immediately Bronx began to "integrate" the learning experience so that a series of experimental projects have existed over the years—LINK, STIR, College Discovery, and currently The Integrated Basic Skills Program—to alleviate the effects of splintering, often teaching reading and writing in conjunction with a content-area course. The English Department added another basic writing course to its sequence soon after Open Admissions, realizing that more than one semester was needed to bring students who had almost no writing experience to college-level writing.

The challenge of Open Admissions was perhaps met most innovatively in the creation of the Writing Workshop where training for tutors included role playing, services for tutees included a newsletter (which they helped write), and materials were developed especially for BCC students. Tutors numbered approximately 15 from 1973 to 1978, staffing the laboratory at all times and working with individual instructors, either with groups in the classroom or with individual students. When the 1975 budget crunch threatened the laboratory's existence, the federally funded CETA program saved it until 1978. Now, with neither New York nor federal funding, the laboratory is reduced to one full-time person and three part-time employees, each working approximately 15 hours a week.

Despite these kinds of cutbacks, the college has developed a very fine Learning Center, and with the aid of a Title III Grant, has added some Apple computers. These are helpful although they can be no substitute for the immediate response of a tutor. The college has also instituted faculty seminars to find ways of reinforcing writing and reading skills in the content areas. Nevertheless, while the commitment to Open Admissions students continues, there is no doubt that our wings have been clipped by the fiscal misfortunes that seem to be endemic to higher education in our time.

Looks Like We Made It
Judith Entes, Compensatory Programs, Baruch College

When evaluating remedial programs, we should look at both positive and negative characteristics over a period of time, and we should pay particular attention to students who have successfully undergone "the treatment."

My paper described the academic careers of two graduating students who had been underprepared when they entered college. Their success stories can serve as models for us. For each, the process was gradual, painful, and frustrating. I recounted the experiences, activities, encounters, interactions, and types of instruction the two students said contributed to their development as readers and writers and to their growth as individuals.

Both students felt the factor contributing most to their success was meeting staff who cared about them personally. These relationships enabled them to discuss and attempt to remedy specific problems, especially developing good study habits. They benefited greatly from learning to delay gratification and to orient themselves towards the future.

If we attempt to examine carefully those who succeeded at CUNY during Open Admissions, perhaps we can replicate their experience for others, so they too can make it.

Working in American Society: The Working World as a Model for the Writing Classroom
Catherine Esposito, English Department, Queens College

At Queens College, after freshman composition, students take a final required writing course—English 6. Two types of English 6 exist: sections that specialize in writing for specific disciplines; and general sections of advanced exposition. Recently, several instructors have developed general sections that concentrate on a single theme; this approach generates ideas and connections among them.

I believe something more than a theme is necessary. My English 6 course—Working in American Society: The Working World as a Model for the Writing Classroom—centers on the theme of work, but also stresses the vital role good writing will play in my students' careers. Though neither a journalism nor a business English course, my classroom becomes a simulated magazine publishing company, the headquarters of *Work* magazine. Students become researchers and editors; the instructor, editor-in-chief. Course content comes from students' observations and experience; films, such as "Modern Times" and "Union Maids"; and three texts: *Working* by Studs Terkel; *Woman in a Changing Society*, edited by Uta West; and *Working It Out: 23 Women Writers, Artists, Scientists, and Scholars Talk About Their Lives and Work*, edited by Ruddick and Daniels. There are two sections of the course—Working in America and Women and Work, both of which are represented in the class magazine. Besides traditional classroom activities, the course adopts those of a corporation: group reports, progress reports, memos, interviews, and both field and library research.

Repeatedly, college instructors tell their students that good writing skills are necessary for successful careers, but too often students do not see it. In my course, they do.

Needed Research on Writing Evaluation
Karen Greenberg (Hunter), Patricia Licklider (John Jay), Michael Ribaudo (Office of Academic Affairs, CUNY), and Lynn Quitman Troyka (Queensborough)—representing the CUNY Task Force on Writing

After a brief overview of the research currently being conducted on the CUNY Writing Skills Assessment Test (CWAT), copies of Dr. Greenberg's research monograph were passed out. We stressed the great need for descriptive research on writing evaluation that will generate theory and theoretically-based research questions. In addition, we stressed the need for short- and long-term evaluations of writing programs and courses. Dean Marie Jean Lederman made the point that administrators and legislators take note of research results and that it is in all of our best interests to back up our claims and requests with valid, reliable data.

For the remainder of the session, we discussed questions from the audience. Various possible research designs were explored. We passed out a reference bibliography on writing research and writing evaluation, and we ended the session by inviting faculty interested in conducting research on writing evaluation to meet with us soon.

Motivating the Non-Traditional Student
Perry Greene and Brenda Greene, Special Programs, Medgar Evers College

We presented two broad strategies for motivating, directing, and organizing student writing.

First, we rely on the newspaper as a focal point for successful writing assignments. The newspaper provides us with easily acquired learning material and the students with a foundation of ideas on which to build discussions and essays. It permits both students and teachers to transfer the focus of writing from mechanics to content, from the grammatical to the contextual. Through group and individual analysis of newspaper articles and editorials, hungry writers are given "food for thought." Interest replaces boredom; students come to analyze the world they live in.

Second, we engage our students in the writing of biography. Whereas autobiographical writing takes students directly to the source of all writing, the self, it frequently threatens the insecure writer. Writing biographical sketches of other people, however, contains enough of the personal element to hold interest and yet is detached enough to be non-threatening.

Permanence and Change: Writing Programs at Hunter and Rutgers
David Hoddeson, English Department, Rutgers-Newark

In general, my students at Rutgers-Newark differ from those I used to teach at Hunter College, CUNY. At Rutgers, we teach working-class sons and daughters who, thanks to very strict parochial or high school educations, normally know the mechanics and rules of written English. There is much less unmediated oral transcription or dialect/ESL overlay than at Hunter. However, many of the Rutgers students have lost their sensitivity to prose voice during their severe passage through learning the conventions of writing. In consequence, they are often as alienated as CUNY basic skills students from the texts they write. Typically, their writing, when they enter college, presents official views in the bloated and circumlocutory bureaucratic language they believe impresses best. For them to see that writing is a mode of learning, it is nearly as necessary

as it ever was for basic writers at Hunter to discover a greater set of possibilities—both in finding ideas and in expressing and explaining them persuasively.

Although the students I now teach are different, my CUNY experience has prepared me well for my present tasks. Because CUNY's reputation in the teaching of writing is so fine, my current research in writing is held as legitimate scholarly inquiry. As a member of the graduate faculty. I offer teaching assistants a course that parallels the paradigms for literary exegesis in advanced study to the styles of teaching writing in undergraduate programs. This double survey gives my students the chance to consider a possible value in teaching writing. This course and enterprises to teach writing throughout the curriculum are the tangible, far-reaching results of CUNY's struggles and strivings throughout the 1970's.

Progress of a Mission
Stephan Khinoy, English Department, College of Staten Island

The Open Admissions writing program at Staten Island Community College (SICC) was marked at its inception by a sense of mission and esprit de corps. The heart of the writing program was the remedial course, English I. This was taught almost entirely by full-time faculty who had volunteered for the task. The English I faculty met weekly to share their problems and accomplishments, as well as to constitute an experimental workshop for new writing techniques. The stress was on freewriting, fluency, and the personal voice.

This approach had immediate success and influence. Part of this is attributable to the essential validity of an approach on which many programs have converged. At any rate, what began as a remedial approach soon colored the program of the entire department. It is also clear that this success depended heavily on the collegial spirit and high morale of the teachers, and that these compensated for certain weaknesses.

Thus, when exigencies—such as the fiscal crisis, disruption caused by teacher burn-out, merger of SICC and Richmond College into the College of Staten Island—eroded and finally dissolved the corps of full-time, regularly meeting faculty, the program was in the doldrums. In this light, the imposition of the Writing Assessment Test was welcomed as an impetus for necessary articulation between levels while retaining our core philosophy.

The Multi-Departmental Basic Skills Program at Bronx Community College
Marie-Louise Matthew, English Department, Bronx Community College

Bronx Community College's year-long Basic Skills Program block-registers approximately 100 students in English, Reading, Communications, counseling sessions, a lab and/or a learning center time slot, and appropriate credit courses. We set our related goals of success on the CUNY tests and preparation for successful college work in the hope that the multi-departmental approach would result in fewer absences, fewer dropouts, and better retention of the related skills of English, reading, and communications.

The opportunity for coordination and reinforcement among several departments has been a major attraction of the program. For example, related, though not overlapping, areas in English and reading can be timed either to coincide or to follow one another; notetaking from a text may be contrasted to notetaking when writing. In another example, the oral work in communications

on final sounds is reinforced by perception work in English. The textbooks of various content courses such as health education, sociology, and psychology can be used in English as sources for writing topics, in communications for speaking practice, and in reading for a range of lessons on notetaking, finding topic sentences, etc. Opportunities for reinforcement have been found not only with English, reading, and communications, but also with the library, the learning center and counseling.

A multi-departmental approach is not free of problems, for example, the great logistical difficulties of scheduling. However, after nearly two semesters, we do have good retention, fewer dropouts, fewer absences. Participating faculty members have welcomed the chance to collaborate, to share successes, to discover new techniques, and to get a fresh look at their disciplines.

CUNY at the Front: Being and Becoming Simultaneously
Roberta S. Matthews, Associate Dean of Faculty, LaGuardia Community College

The history of writing programs is the story of *becoming* a discipline while at the same time *being* a discipline. Our growth as teachers is the growth of our field.

As Assistant Director of Composition, Director of Composition, and finally as Chairperson of a brand new English Department, I was involved in the growth of a department and the development of a program that was understaffed, under-tenured, and vulnerable. But we survived.

Survival and growth were based on a number of perceptions. First, we learned, by teaching ourselves, how to teach writing. Second, we changed with the times, our Writing for Business course, sheer heresy in many a traditional English Department, being one example. Third, we learned that basic writers need time to acquire and become comfortable with their new skill. Fourth, we realized that instructors do not have infallible powers of judgment and do not instinctively know when a student has passed a course. Fifth, as a corollary to four, we acknowledged that instructors need objective means of evaluating student achievement.

As we continue to grow, several areas need our attention: writing teachers must learn how budgets are allocated and how they get their funding; we need even better and more effective ways to diagnose our students and measure their success; we need to prepare ourselves to serve the tremendous influx of ESL students and the potential increase in adult populations.

In sum, we need a clear definition of what we do (as opposed to what we do not do). Fat cats are fair game and, although you might not think so, writing is a fat cat. The new game in town seems to be criticizing writing and other skills courses for not accomplishing what was formerly perceived as the goal of an entire education. Most of all, we need to state clearly to our colleagues outside of writing what we can and do accomplish and what they, in turn, can and should accomplish.

A Short View of a Long Haul
Donald McQuade, English Department, Queens College

My paper presented a detailed review of basic writing instruction at CUNY, celebrating the advances and lamenting the setbacks of the decade since the inception of Open Admissions. I speculated on the danger of nostalgically reinventing the past—in this case substituting cohesion for collaboration in the teaching of writing. Instead, I described the wide range of approaches faculty took to meet the different needs of different students in the writing programs at the University's various colleges.

Having considered how Queens College responded to the specific problems of teaching writing over the past ten years, I posed what I see as the central challenge for Queens, and for the University as a whole, over the next decade: designing, testing, and improving the theory and practice of making writing and humanities elective courses more accessible to our student-citizens who speak English as a second language. Most CUNY faculty no longer share a cultural heritage with a substantial number of their students. In this respect, it can be said that—intellectually and professionally—Open Admissions is just beginning at CUNY. I closed with a series of recommendations for University-wide research into the socio-cultural and linguistic circumstances that impinge on the educational lives of CUNY's new generation of ESL students and suggested a preliminary plan for helping them enjoy basic and elective courses in the humanities.

The Implications of Freewriting in a Writing Program
Jerome F. Megna, School of Education, Brooklyn College

In his research on written discourse, James Britton claims that expressive discourse is the least used mode of writing in schools. By expressive discourse, he means the pouring out of personal feelings and ideas in a way that regards the reader as a trusted ally, one who shares the context of the writer's meaning. Britton claims that writing in this way creates a "rising tide of involvement" for the writer, gives him the opportunity to clarify his opinions, make discoveries on paper, use revising strategies more effectively, and establish an authentic voice.

The kind of writing that has been popularized by Peter Elbow and Ken Macrorie in the last decade, freewriting, comes very close to possessing all the characteristics of Britton's notion of expressive discourse. Simply stated, freewriting occurs when a writer puts his pen to paper and, for a limited period of time, writes without stopping, without rereading what he has written, and without bothering to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Using freewriting in a classroom as a warm-up exercise or as a prewriting technique may give writers greater self-confidence, provide them with material they can later refine, and enable them to generate ideas which would not have occurred to them unless they were "forced out" in this manner.

Freewriting may take several forms. The most extreme form is the irrational freewrite, an exercise in freewriting which asks students to simply let tumble out of their minds and on to paper the illogical, daring, and absurd ideas which are bottled up there. A different freewriting exercise is the focused freewrite. In this, students are asked to write without stopping after concentrating for a few minutes on a particular problem, an image, or a word. Still another freewriting exercise is the word-generation freewrite. Here students are to create a list of words, phrases, or

ideas that come immediately to their minds as they think about an assigned topic. The use of freewriting as a prewriting strategy may have a profound effect on writing development and may help students recognize the recursive nature of the writing process.

Exercising Language Options: A Pro-Choice Approach to Standard English
Sally Mettler, Speech and Theatre Department, Lehman College

As we know, many students for whom standard English is a second language or second dialect come from, and continue to live in, oral cultures: milieux in which the most powerful medium of communication is speech, and not print. Furthermore, the communicative imperatives of New York City mean that students cannot await instruction in the standard dialect before undertaking to survive and even to progress here. As a result, they acquire English primarily in the aural/oral mode, and their written expression is often subject to the vicissitudes of this acquisition. In other words, they are more likely to write what they hear and speak than what they are specifically taught to write; at the least, they are frequently confounded by the dichotomy they face.

In their academic pursuits, students constantly confront the conflict between standard English and their native dialects or languages. In order to succeed, they must be able accurately to substitute standard English forms for those dialectal or idiolectal forms which are stigmatized in the standard-speaking community.

In helping students to choose from among the options available to them, there is much to be gained by enabling them to look at their own languages, or "interlanguages" as they appear on paper, provided they can compare and contrast them with those standard forms which may have eluded them or which they may have consistently avoided and even rejected, for a number of reasons, sometimes related to affect and attitude.

We provide a structure for this approach by elaborating a specific group of highly stigmatized errors which occur regularly in speech and writing, called "image-breakers." Some of these are related to the phonology of standard English, some are structurally-based, and some are related to patterns of history and acculturation.

Once the "image-breakers" are described, explained, and exemplified for the student, they are given the task of recognizing them in their own expression and that of others. Through the process of recognizing and categorizing the forms, then choosing the standard form which can be substituted appropriately, students are helped toward the goal of editing out those items which are stigmatized in the standard-speaking community, and whose use damages the communicator's image and prospects.

Back to Basic Stories: Literature in a Thematic ESL Course
Beth Pacheco and Joan Gregg, Developmental Skills Department, New York City Technical College

In our thematically unified reading course, advanced ESL students study short stories within an interdisciplinary context. Each reading assignment in our course—The Autonomous Individual—reflects an aspect of the key social science term "autonomy." Autonomy is a particularly interesting theme to ESL students because of the differences between American

values, which emphasize competition, personal expression, well-being, and freedom, and the values of their cultures, which emphasize cooperation, group solidarity, and the family above the individual.

The Yellow Brick Road to Literacy
Ann Raimes, Developmental English Program, Hunter College

Once upon a time, in the 1960's, college professors lectured about literature, students took notes, professors gave exams, and students passed. Then, shattering the calm, came the cyclone of Open Admissions. Each CUNY branch set out along a different road to the Land of Literacy. Like many others, Hunter College came up against the wide ditch of budget cuts, the poppy field of grammar drill, and the Wicked Witch of the WAT (Writing Assessment Test). These setbacks entailed a rethinking of the progress along the road and the realization that English departments had to gather up allies along the way. The second decade of the Open Admissions program will present the need for us to go beyond minimal competency for all students, including the growing numbers of ESL students, in all college courses. We're going to have to have as much courage, heart, and brain as we had in the 70's.

Critical Teaching Versus Back-to-Basics
Ira Shor, English Department, College of Staten Island

The back-to-basics movement of the past decade is the tip of a conservative social iceberg. In society at large, there has been a conservative restoration following the insurgent 60's. Back-to-basics is the pedagogical arm of this general conservative trend in American culture. As pedagogy, back-to-basics serves to vocationalize English education. It makes writing instruction into narrow technical training. In turn, the long-range effect of narrow education is to depress the aspirations of teachers and students alike. Vocationalized writing classes become places where both teacher and student expect little learning. In contrast, humanist education encourages broad horizons. As a humanist pedagogy, "critical teaching" promotes the most spacious learning possible in a writing class. The critical classroom focuses on each student's ability to think conceptually, critically, and problematically about social issues. In addition, critical teaching encourages self-education techniques and integrates themes from everyday life. It takes a "communications" approach to language learning, using all the body's resources for communicating—speaking, listening, reading, writing. Further, critical teaching adapts each course to the specific situation of the students, rather than having a standardized pedagogy to which each student must respond. To promote democratic culture, the critical classroom goes farther, by employing dialogue as its foundational learning method rather than lecture-recitation or the Socratic technique. In sum, the critical writing course is a vehicle for developing conceptual literacy and autonomous learning in students.

Writing Topics: Preference and Prevalence
Rick Shur, English Language Center, LaGuardia Community College

In an anonymous questionnaire distributed in classes, students in a credit-bearing writing program were asked to look at a list of 21 "topics" and report with a number from 0 to 5 how often each one was presented in class for a writing assignment. The numbers were identified as 0=never, 1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often, and 5=all the time. The topics in-

cluded specific and general categories found in van Ek's list of Specific Notations (Council of Europe, 1976), such as jobs and careers, personal problems, movies and TV, vacations, crime on the streets, sexual problems, romantic life, computer science, religion, sports, and family life. Students were then asked to circle the seven topics they most preferred. Correlations were drawn between reported "prevalence" and "preference" to look for major discrepancies. In this sampling it was found that celebrities, science, and politics were highly preferred though not prevalent. On the other hand, family life and personal problems were seen as highly prevalent and little preferred. The findings suggest the need to re-evaluate the state of "humanistic" teaching.

The Potential of Computer-Assisted Instruction for Basic Writing Teachers
Michael G. Southwell, English Department, York College

The success of the COMP-LAB basic writing course at York College has led to its adoption by a number of other colleges, both within and outside of CUNY. Now, portions of the lab exercises have been translated into Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI). This makes another option available to basic writing teachers.

CAI is fairly familiar in fields like science and mathematics, but for various reasons is much less common in writing instruction. What little there is, is often ineffective, sometimes because it applies the instructional method to inappropriate material and sometimes because it fails to distinguish among three essential components of good teaching materials: instruction, which must be structured; practice, which must be provided in contexts; and testing, which must always occur in order to check students' understanding.

Well-designed CAI exercises can be more effective than the same exercises could be in a workbook format. They can be completely interactive so that students are never passive spectators. Their use can be controlled so that students cannot do them out of order, cannot skip any, and cannot go on without demonstrating understanding. They can be managed so that students receive instruction truly individualized to meet their own particular needs. They focus students' attention on the learning task at hand so that students understand exactly what they are responsible for. This is particularly important for learners with unsatisfactory prior educational experience.

Toward Implementing a Bridge Course Between ESL and Freshman Composition
Alfredo Villanueva, English Department, Hostos Community College

This paper presented some ideas about implementing a "bridge" course between Hostos' ESL program and freshman composition for students who enter the college as Spanish monolingual adults. These students are usually also poorly prepared in their first language. They internalize some of the rules and conventions they learn in their ESL courses, but still translate much English into Spanish, which they do not manipulate well either. A bridge course for these students utilizes comparative and contrastive analysis of English and Spanish grammatical and rhetorical structures in order to illuminate some of their most pressing difficulties. For example, in explaining the substitution of the subjunctive in Spanish for the infinitive in English, students must be told to memorize the difference, which is untranslatable, and drilled until they lose the habit of trying to find the appropriate term in English by thinking it in Spanish. On the other hand, perfect tenses and punctuation are roughly the same in both languages, and an

understanding of either in Spanish will help students learn it in English. As regards rhetoric, students should be told about the different patterns that exist in English and Spanish. The use of a Spanish rhetorical pattern in an English composition may result in the composition's being judged verbose and unclear by an English instructor. Adults never lose their first language; any teaching of a second language must take this fact into consideration.

Traditional Writing in a Traditional School
John M. Walsh, English Department, Benjamin N. Cardozo High School

Benjamin Cardozo High School inaugurated an expository writing program in its tenth-year curriculum in 1980 to meet the student writing needs that emerged from a study conducted by the English Department. These needs are: to write organized discourse in all academic courses; to write college papers, reports, and examinations; to write reports for professional, business, and community purposes; to pass the Regents Competency Test in writing, the Comprehensive Examination in English, and college proficiency exams, such as the CUNY Writing Assessment Test; to be able to enlighten and persuade others on the issues of the day.

Every student in the tenth grade is expected to be able to write a four-paragraph expository essay which meets well-defined standards. The introduction arouses the reader's interest and states the thesis. Each developmental paragraph concerns one aspect of the subject, which is stated in a topic sentence. The topic sentence is developed by means of concrete details and reasons. Finally, the closing paragraph restates the thesis, suggests a course of action or draws a conclusion, and signals completion. In addition to mastering this organizational structure, students are encouraged to develop an effective style; they must also know the conventions of English grammar and usage.

At the end of the semester, all tenth-grade students write a composition on the same topic. Their papers are graded by a teacher other than their own using criteria derived from the CUNY Writing Assessment Test. Students who cannot meet minimum standards of competency after one year in the program are scheduled for a remedial writing class.

Writing From The Self
Thomas C. Wheeler, English Department, York College

For many students fear is as much of a problem in writing as grammar. Students must be given confidence in their own powers: a grammar they possess in their speaking voice; the point of view that comes from their experience in life. Much of grammar is innate. Children, without instruction, speak in sentences. Ask students to talk in class and point out the sentences in their speech. In writing, the speaking voice is put through the mind; writing offers the time to define, to develop, to elevate. Students should not write in new words they will inevitably misuse, but in the vocabulary natural to them. Once students have some sense of their own powers, the grammar they don't know can be taught. The first writing should come from personal experience and observation of the world. To write on literature, students must react with a point of view their experience has bred; the novel is but another world to react to. They must never be asked to write a thesis statement or formal introduction; there they frame a preview before they know the course of their thinking. Let them begin with the strongest ideas in their minds. The piece will organize itself as the idea develops, as details are brought in. American literature of two centu-

ries has drawn student response. Writing about the immediate world and about literature, students can use and cultivate their identities.

LaGuardia's Integrated Skills Reinforcement Project
Harvey S. Wiener, English Department, LaGuardia Community College

The Integrated Skills Reinforcement Project (ISR) at LaGuardia Community College attempts to carry responsibilities for reinforcing skills in reading, writing, and speaking into the subject matter of every course. There are two distinctive features of the program.

First there is a catalog of techniques prepared during several years' work by specialists in the communication skills. This catalog identifies a number of strategies that subject-area instructors can incorporate into their syllabi, strategies designed to ease access to content for students. Thus, faculty members learn how to use course content for previewing texts, for exploring the writing process, for improving oral communications, for developing guide questions students can use to focus their reading, for producing questions that sustain responses from students, for creating realistic writing assignments—there are many others. Using a step-by-step approach, the catalog provides examples drawn from syllabi prepared by former ISR participants.

The second feature of the program is that faculty members redesign their syllabi in collaborative settings. Meeting weekly in groups of four and under the aegis of a team leader, instructors from widely divergent disciplines draft materials for course use. Team members discuss each strategy and provide written commentary on the work of their colleagues. After developing a new syllabus, each participant then teaches the course for which the ISR syllabus was designed. Instructors videotape two or three of their sessions and discuss with team leaders the progress of the class and the effectiveness of the strategies.

Supported by the College, by Title III, and by the New York State Vocational Education Department, the ISR program was cited in New York State's "Projects of Excellence" competition.

Deconstructive Thinking and Reteaching Writing
Leo Zanderer, English Department, Brooklyn College

By now a "field" of basic composition, the teaching of writing prose, has been established. It exists, however, in a somewhat alienated state, cut off from literary criticism, on the one hand, and the disciplines which investigate the self and its expressions—philosophy, psychology, linguistics—on the other. There is a real need to establish stronger links with these disciplines and recognize, especially, the sources of thought common to all. In particular, we might start by noting a common defensiveness about writing that we share with the deconstructionists, whatever the seeming nihilism implicit in their denial of the author's role (Foucault) and the separate existence of the text. Like ourselves, they are merely trying to identify writing as a real object and find out more about its origins and application for modern man.

We should try to recognize the essentially post-existential assumptions we share with linguists like Wittgenstein, structuralists like the early Barthes and Lacan, and the extreme post-structuralist thought of Derrida and Harold Bloom.

Our own struggle to make writing a natural experience which includes self in its personal and emotive modes of expression, concepts of process that allow for forms of "free" and even irrational expression, and collaborative learning methods and role-playing techniques which emphasize "the other" as audience finds its natural allies in that part of intellectual history that spawned existentialism and its recent descendents. Our theories, which happily can claim on-the-job experience as their origins, need to be developed according to other modernist positions, particularly those concerned with man as an historical and social entity.

Student Responsibility in Writing
Hannah Zilbergeld, Academic Skills/SEEK, Hunter College

I have been able to increase the passing rate on the CUNY Writing Assessment Test from 15% to 50-60% through a system of writing where the responsibility for correcting errors rests with the students.

The first part of the system is that students write an essay every class period. The rationale for this is that remedial students need to practice writing essays. The second part involves making the students responsible for their errors. Students are required to proofread their essays aloud to themselves or in small groups. They are given concrete points to look for in their oral proofreading. The rationale for this oral sharing of essays is that it helps students see their errors by hearing them.

After the papers are given a grade, students are required to read their papers aloud to the instructor. Errors are recorded on each student's folder. After several essays, students begin to see their particular pattern of errors. Students focus on their errors so they won't become overwhelmed. They can see that they only have to work on two or three surmountable problems.

The final part is drill for error correction. Students are required to rewrite every sentence that contains a spelling or grammatical error. This forces students to correct their own errors. They are not afraid to make errors because they can rewrite their essays as many times as they wish in order to improve their grades.

AFTERWARD

CAWS in the Future:

We are proud of the accomplishments of CAWS and of its individual members. During the last ten years the job of teaching students to write has become a profession largely through the dedication of individuals in this field to necessary and serious work. This sense of professionalism on the part of CUNY writing faculty has survived retrenchment and budget cuts. We will continue our efforts to pool resources, to build a common expertise in writing that can be applied to the various campuses of CUNY, and to disseminate information on city, state, and national levels.

CAWS has helped us maintain our faith in ourselves and what we do, and it can help us meet the challenges of the next ten years. We mean to be alert and responsive to these challenges. We can do this more effectively if we define the role of CAWS in relation to the other organizations in CUNY concerned with writing programs—the Writing Task Force and the Instructional Resource Center—and integrate our efforts with theirs. On broad issues we intend to work with the ESL Council and CARE, organizations within CUNY that parallel ours. And we are conscious of the need to articulate among the several levels of writing instruction in our schools. This spring our annual conference will join our organization with the New York City Association of Teachers of English to examine local writing programs that span the elementary, secondary, and college levels and to identify issues that should be of concern to all three. To implement writing across the CUNY curiculum is a long-term goal.

The future demands that we continue to learn more about our profession: how to assume the responsibilities of administration, research, and publication; how to lobby for issues, and how to effect and support change. Because we believe that writing is central to education, we commit our collective talent and energy to developing for CUNY the very best writing programs as the surest means of attracting and retaining a wide spectrum of students.

Marcia Silver, CAWS Co-Chair
Brooklyn College